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ABSTRACT

This report is designed to provide know-how, coping skills, and understanding to school personnel interested in learning about and/or setting up citizen advisory councils in their districts. The report describes the anatomy of a typical advisory committee, suggests how to get one started, what committees do and should not do, and how committees supplement the school board and the administration. Throughout the report, the author describes activities of numerous operational citizen advisory groups. The appendix contains samples of documents for use in setting up an advisory committee. These include sample bylaws, administrative policy, board policy, letter to parents, membership application, and a sample evaluation form. (Author/DN)

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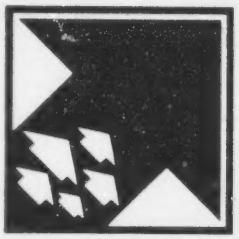

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Public Participation Increases; Guides Change in American Education

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

EA 006 212

A Publication of the
National School Public Relations Association

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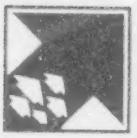

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

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This Is a Current Trends Report

Citizens Advisory Committees: Public Participation Increases; Guides Change in American Education is the fourth in a series of reports on *Current Trends in School Policies and Practices*. The aim of the *Current Trends* series is to provide know-how, coping skills and understanding to school administrators, school-community relations directors, board members and other school staff as they face the demands of their jobs.

In addition to the *Current Trends* reports, the National School Public Relations Association also publishes *Education U.S.A. Special Reports*, which probe in depth a single current area of education.

Citizens Advisory Committees: Public Participation Increases; Guides Change in American Education was written by Neild B. Oldham, with the assistance of Ben Brodinsky and Beatrice M. Gudridge. It was developed by the *Education U.S.A. Special Reports* staff: Shirley Boes, Managing Editor; Roy K. Wilson, Editorial Director. Production: Cynthia Menand, Manager; Doris Jones, Joan Lenz, Alice Mansfield and Joyce Pullen.

Overview

Wherever there is a board of education, there is likely to be a citizens advisory committee – or two, or three, or more such groups.

And the belief seems to be spreading that if *some* citizen participation is good for the schools, *more* citizen participation is better; and if one citizen advisory committee is worth setting up, then a dozen, or a score, are worth even more.

The survey conducted by *Education U.S.A.* revealed that only a small number of school districts have not had, and do not now have, a citizens committee. Some would not even tolerate the idea. "Why should we have a citizens advisory committee when we have a board of education?" one respondent to the survey wrote in red ink on his questionnaire.

But the time for listing "for" and "against" arguments on citizen participation has long since passed for the vast majority of schools. The questions now are: How do we set up a committee? How shall its members be named? How do we get most value from its work? What kinds of tasks should a committee be asked to undertake? What are the characteristics of a committee which makes the best contribution to a public school system?

Probing into these questions, the *Education U.S.A.* survey obtained specific, and often surprising, answers – the most surprising of which was that the citizens advisory committee movement has taken off into unexpected directions. First, although originally intended as a group serving the entire district and its board of education, the citizens committee is sprouting and flowering at the school building level. And, whereas at first conceived to be a consultative body, it is becoming largely an operational mechanism.

Citizen committees exist as wisdom-dispensing and policy-guiding agencies serving boards of education in large numbers all over the United States; but they are overshadowed, and sometimes overwhelmed, in volume of activity by the uni-task committee working for a single school or attendance area.

The *Education U.S.A.* survey has spotted a citizens committee whose job is to prepare copy for a school brochure. Other committees are publishing newsletters for the district; policing streets against bullies victimizing young pupils; giving scholarships; establishing school bus stops; and acting as grievance panels. Obviously, such committees don't advise; they perform chores.

Another range of activities carried on by citizens committees, both at the district and school building level, calls for "studying problems and finding solutions" for a bewildering array of topics. The directive, "study the topic and find the solution," is probably impossible to carry out with measurable success. But this has not stopped thousands of committees from plunging into their tasks at the call of school authorities.

The fact is that school authorities have discovered they have at their disposal an abundant supply of public talent, time and willingness to work. Further, most school people believe this reservoir of public energy and wisdom can be useful to the school system, the community and the children. This usefulness is most often described in terms of "improved two-way communication," "school-community interaction" and "participatory school administration." Under the rhetoric lie practical results, dollar-and-cents achievements.

The value of citizens committees stems primarily from their continuing success in promoting special bond issues, getting voter approval on tax levies and pushing through school budgets. Originally, when committees were created for the purpose of getting more dollars for schools they were dissolved after the financial goals were reached.

But school authorities started to recognize a good thing when they saw one and they began to make the most of it. Citizen committees are now called into action for attacks not only on fiscal problems but on problems representing the entire range of school administration, instruction and community relations; and not on an *ad hoc* basis, but for continuing service.

Some respondents to the *Education U.S.A.* survey warn that exploitation of the concept and the mechanism of the citizens committee can bring harm to the educational community. There are hazards and dangers ahead when spurious reasons are advanced for the creation of committees and when these groups are misused in any of the following ways:

The committee as a rubber stamp: When boards of education, or administrators, initiate questionable or controversial programs or policies, they often seek the support of a citizens committee. Rubber stamping an unsound idea seldom prevents future trouble.

The committee as shock absorber: When attacks and criticism in a community rise and spread, some school authorities are apt to create a citizens group to absorb some of the flak. Both the ethics and effectiveness of such a move can be questioned.

The committee as front-man promoter: When school authorities feel insecure in areas of budget, bond issues, curriculum change, student discipline or teacher negotiations, one natural tendency is to fall back on the committee as propagandizer.

The committee as bailer-out: School boards in trouble with the community, teachers, students or taxpayers often create – in a hurry – citizens groups to save them. There is little evidence of successful outcomes in such instances.

School systems get in trouble because of poor school board policies or weak administration, and no citizens committee can correct these weaknesses. Nor can citizens committees come up with instant recommendations to get a faltering school system out of its sloughs of inefficiency. Only when organized for a sound purpose and only when nurtured with good care can the citizens group promote the cause of education in the community.

At the district level, the citizens advisory committee usually makes its finest contribution when it is created for a major purpose (not little tasks) and when it is utilized for consultation (not for operation). At its best, the districtwide committee is concerned mostly with identifying elements of policy to recommend to the board of education. These elements of policy properly apply to such major challenges as:

- Agreeing on educational philosophy for the district.
- Long-range planning.
- Significant curriculum revision.
- Instituting major organizational changes.

When a school board becomes involved in opening up new areas of activity (e.g., open education, the 12-month school year, or career education for the lower grades) the citizens committee is a proper medium for helping the board get new insights, facts or concepts.

Evidence from the *Education U.S.A.* survey suggests that, at the district level, the citizens committee which sticks to concepts, principles and policy recommendations makes the best contribution to the community. The cracks of failure begin to show in the districtwide committee when it becomes entangled with details of running a school.

At the school building level, proliferation of committee tasks and purposes is probably not harmful. School building administrators need advice on a large number of issues – from playground supervision to rules on smoking – and parents are frequently willing to give such advice. Building administrators also need workers for a larger number of tasks, and again, citizens are usually willing to contribute their time and effort. Little concerned with policy or broad educational goals, the building citizens "advisory" committee rolls up its sleeves and goes to work. "Advisory" hardly belongs in the title of such a group.

Neither semantics or conceptual definitions bother the school board or the administrator beset by hard-knot problems. When in need, school authorities call upon the layman to help. And the

What's Happening Now

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The citizens advisory committee is almost universally accepted by school districts as an adjunct to the board of education and the administration – usually as useful, sometimes as troublesome.

Less than 5% of the school districts in the United States (and this is an estimate) have resisted and continue to resist the citizens committee in school tasks and issues.

Two major categories of committees function side by side: the districtwide committee, and the school building or school attendance area committee. Both are changing from *ad hoc* to standing committees.

The districtwide committee, responding to board of education needs, is usually concerned with major educational issues of administration, organization, curriculum, instruction or community relations.

- At their best, districtwide committees are truly advisory.
- Their most useful function is to recommend policy for board consideration and adoption.
- The school building committee is spreading fast and now dominates the scene of layman's participation in school activities. School building committees are most often operating mechanisms to assist the administration with specific tasks. Their contribution to policy or concept is usually minimal.
- School building committees are most often operating mechanisms to assist the administration with specific tasks.
- Their contribution to policy or concept is usually minimal.

Yet another category of citizen groups has been stimulated by requirements of federal programs, notably Title I, ESEA, and vocational education. Parent councils under Title I and advisory groups required for career education programs have widened citizen participation in problems of children and youth.

Citizens committees study and act upon a vast range of topics and issues: philosophy, finance, construction, personnel, transportation, desegregation, student discipline. There is hardly an educational problem or task which a citizens group has not taken on – including some which belong primarily to school authorities, such as selection and employment of staff.

Among desirable outcomes of citizen committee activity are "two-way communication," "parent involvement" and "democratized administration" – in addition to getting a specific job done at little cost to the taxpayer.

Exploitation and misuse of the committees trouble some educators. Parents and taxpayers who feel used and abused by school people do not make good supporters of their public schools.

There are no "models" for citizens committees; nor are there "model" procedures in creating, maintaining or dissolving them. Instead, the *Education U.S.A.* survey indicates there is room for an infinite variety in committee make-up, size, scope, activity and authority.

And the principal caution can be stated as follows: the citizens committee is not another board of education; not a surrogate board; nor is it intended to displace or replace board thinking, board action or board responsibility.

result has been a virtual explosion of citizen energy on behalf of the schools in recent years.

True, citizen participation generates troublesome questions and dilemmas: How shall we get a citizens committee started? How shall it operate? How shall we control? What should committees do and what shouldn't they do? How can committees supplement the school board and the administration? The chapters that follow contain *some* of the answers – but they are answers which have to be tried and tested in each community to see whether they will work in the different and differing school districts of the United States.

But regardless of trouble, questions and dilemmas, the citizens committee movement is continuing to provide the ideas and the mechanisms for helping solve pressing and persistent educational problems. The outlook is for an increase and intensification of committee activities. One example is appropriate here: When a large Midwestern city school district named a citizens advisory committee to look into the educational problems of the community, the group worked for a year and then came up with its answer: the recommendation was for more citizens committees – one for each school attendance area.

Chapter 1

The Anatomy of An Advisory Committee

The vast majority of those responding to the *Education U.S.A.* survey reported that their schools or districts do have citizens advisory committees, of one kind or another.

Districts represented in the replies ran the gamut from huge metropolitan ones like New York and Los Angeles to a sparsely settled rural district in Northern Michigan, whose major problem relative to advisory committees was winter transportation for widely scattered citizens. A small percentage of respondents reported that their districts had no advisory committees.

'Advisory' Means Just That

On one point, at least, the survey showed great agreement among school officials: advisory committees are to be advisory *only*. (Whether parents and citizens share that conviction is an unanswered question.) Most respondents in replying to the question, "What is the extent of the committee's authority?" answered, "Advisory." Many gave the word some added emphasis – *"Advisory Only!!"* A few indicated that while the committee's authority is advisory only, the advice carries great weight, and the board is strongly inclined to follow that advice. Of these few, one – a district in Brooklyn, N.Y. – stated that while the committee's authority is "technically advisory," it is "de facto unlimited": the school board has not rejected a single recommendation in five years. Another respondent termed the committee's authority "absolute." Such responses were clearly in a minority, however; several respondents categorized the committee's authority as "None."

Board Relations Generally Good

Responses to the question: "What are the relations between school board and advisory committees?" were overwhelmingly in the "good to excellent" category, with such words as "cordial" and "cooperative" used often. Only a handful characterized the relations as "fair," or "strained."

Contrary to some of the vague fears that are often expressed about advisory committees, only 6 out of some 400 respondents having advisory committees found the relationship between their committee and board to be less than acceptable. In a number of cases, however, answers were expressed in such terms as "Okay so far"; "So far, so good"; "Amicable now, may be trouble later."

Many of the committees reported that they have been in existence only a brief time – often less than a year. While some committees meet weekly or twice a month, this usually indicates that intensive work is being done on a specific task for which a deadline has been set. Continuing, longer-lived committees (fewer in number) are apt to meet less frequently. Local school advisory committees tend to meet once a month while those at the district level meet somewhat less frequently. This is by no means always the case. Advisory committees that meet only once or twice a year may someday find themselves accused of simply fulfilling legal requirements as their only function.

What Do CAC's Do?

The tasks assigned to advisory committees reflect almost every possible concern of a school district – from establishing bus stops to writing a philosophy of education. Respondents to the *Education U.S.A.* survey indicated that committees have dealt with: building programs (including site selection); vocational education; adult education; finances (taxes, budget, bond issues); student behavior (including student rights, discipline, dress code, smoking) and sex education and drug pro-

grams; curriculum and other instructional matters (including report cards, guidance, gifted students, year-round school, new programs); boundaries, district organization, integration; transportation and lunch program; federal programs; purchase of equipment and uniforms; special education; use of school facilities; human relations (ethnic, racial).

In addition to these specific subject areas, committees were also asked to perform many general functions, such as:

- Long-range planning, establishment of goals and objectives, setting policies and priorities, and evaluating programs.
- Improving public relations, liaison with the community, taking surveys, disseminating information.
- Needs assessment recommendations and suggestions, input, reaction to proposals.
- Class visitations, screening paraprofessionals, recreational activities, legwork for task forces, and even "select principal."

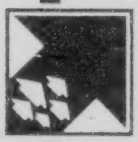
Most respondents described the beneficial results of advisory councils in the area of better communication and greater understanding. But differences were seen in the direction of the flow of communication – from the schools to the community, or from the community back to school personnel, or both ways at once. Responses were as follows: better public relations (committees lend support to schools, spread understanding of schools' programs); feedback and input (giving the community's viewpoints to the school establishment); improved two-way communication (both schools and community understand and appreciate each other better). In addition to these three categories, many respondents cited practical help with specific projects (such as building programs, vocational education, volunteer aides, curriculum revision) as productive results of citizens advisory committees. Program suggestions (new ideas for beginning or improving school programs) were also listed by a few respondents as beneficial results of committees.

How Committees Get Started

Most replies fell into five main categories: In response to federal program requirements . . . in response to state (or provincial) requirements . . . in anticipation of a particular need or needs . . . as a result of the board's and/or administration's desire for better communication with and involvement of the community . . . as a result of parent/citizen demand for better communication with and involvement in the school system. In addition to these most frequently named reasons for starting committees, several districts reported their advisory committees resulted from integration or racial-ethnic problems; and a few others gave miscellaneous origins for their committees, including three or four that had to do with district reorganization (decentralization or consolidation), and others stemming from student pressure, replacement of an ineffective PTA, consultants' recommendation, and PPBS management study.

How Members Are Selected

Of all the criteria selected for study, the means of choosing members of advisory committees showed perhaps the widest variety of all. The replies showed that advisory committees may be:



How Big a Committee?

Like almost all characteristics of citizens advisory committees, size varies greatly from community to community: there are committees as small as half a dozen, and others that number 300 or more. The largest committees are usually broken down into smaller sub-groups for many of their work sessions. The majority of committees fall in a range of from 15 to 45 members.

- appointed by the board of education
- voluntary (self-selected)
- elected by parents/citizens
- chosen by civic (community) organizations
- appointed by professional staff.

But this does not reflect the complexity of the selection process for many committees. A great many committees use two or more of the methods listed for choosing their members – some members appointed by the board, others, representatives of community organizations, etc. The variations within any one category seem endless; for example, although the board appoints members, they may be recommended by the superintendent after a screening process involving principals or present committee members or others. Policies governing parent elections are often, and necessarily, very detailed and complex. Procedures for selecting committee members may also change from the initial year of operation to subsequent years. Other advisory members have been:

- chosen by the current committee itself
- chosen by tribal members (Indian district)
- chosen by students (student council); and appointed by selectmen or town manager.

In the overwhelming majority of districts using citizens advisory committees, the board appoints the members. The next most common method is to have the staff make the appointments – usually the superintendent for districtwide committees and the principal for local school committees. In many districts, the local school advisory committees name representatives to the districtwide committees. A large number of districts use only volunteers, in effect a self-selection process. Many are chosen as representatives of civic organizations, prominent among them being school-related groups such as the PTA.

A procedure gaining wider use is the election of members by parents or citizens. Federal programs such as Title I, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, are directly responsible for this type of procedure. The federal guidelines do not require election, but this requirement has been added by many state guidelines.

Membership selection usually reflects particular local conditions. For example, in some districts encompassing Indian reservations, tribal council members must be represented. In other districts, political officials – i.e., selectmen, town manager, county supervisors – make appointments. Student members usually come from the ranks of those already elected as student council members or class officers.

Many committees, once established, have the authority to appoint new members and fill vacancies, sometimes completely on their own, but more often with the approval of the board of education or an administrative official.

Many advisory committees include professional members appointed by the superintendent or principal. Infrequently, teacher organizations elect representatives.

Often, boards and administrators specifically appoint representatives who reflect the geographic, socioeconomic and ethnic makeup of the community.

Generally, the more informal the selection process (e.g., when the continuing procedure is nothing more than a blanket invitation for everyone interested to attend advisory committee meetings), the less substantive the committee's contribution to the school district; whereas the more structured the selection process, the more substantive the contribution.

A few districts make a pointed effort to include critics or anti-establishment types on the advisory committee. One elementary principal in Michigan reported, for example, that "volunteers are selected from critics or from various school PTAs."

Following are illustrations of the different ways communities and districts set up their advisory council.

Fayetteville, N.C.

Fayetteville, N.C., committee members are chosen as follows: 10 lay citizens by the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners; 10 lay citizens by the Fayetteville City Council; 10 lay citizens by the Fayetteville Board of Education; 3 lay citizens by the PTA Council; 6 professionals by teacher organizations; and 3 student members who are student body presidents.

Thornton Township, Ill.

Citizens of Thornton Township (Ill.) School District 205 are invited to submit applications for membership on the Superintendent's Advisory Committee. Application forms are available to any resident, with a student form for high school students. Applications are submitted to the advisory committee, which makes appointments. Those not selected are notified and their names placed in a pool for possible future appointment. An effort is made to maintain a balanced, representative committee. The advisory committee is charged with promoting racial harmony and good human relations, curriculum improvements, support for schools, and new programs of study. (See p. 55.)

Springfield, Mass.

In Springfield, Mass., which has an election procedure, letters are sent to parents of children at Title I schools soliciting their participation in the formation of a Parents' Advisory Council. Separate letters are sent from the school counselor, breakfast supervisor, and teacher aides. The letters are written in both English and Spanish. (See p. 54.)

Lists of eligible voters (parents of children receiving Title I services and living in the Title I area) are prepared for each Springfield school. At the initial meetings, representatives and alternates are nominated; the elections are held one week later. Ballots listing all nominees in alphabetical order are mailed to eligible parents (two to a home with a father and mother). Parents can vote for one or two representatives and can return their ballot in an unmarked envelope through the mail, via their child, or deliver it directly before the deadline that is listed on the ballot.

Title I teacher aides, under the direction of the principal, count the ballots. The top vote-getters become the representatives, and the second and third ranking candidates, the alternates. In case of a tie vote, the winner is determined by drawn lots.

Portland, Ore.

The representation of potentially alienated citizens on its advisory committees is assured by the Parkrose School District, Portland, Ore. The school district policies contain the following clause:

> "The members of the committee will be appointed by the board of education based on recommendations from the building principals and the advisory committees after they are in operation. Members shall be selected from all segments of the community – young and old, parent and nonparent, low and high income levels, male and female, with a mixture of *nominally supportive and nonsupportive persons.*" (emphasis added.)

Montebello, Calif.

The formation of the councils in Montebello, Calif., began with a general meeting to which all citizens were invited. An *ad hoc* committee was chosen at the meeting to assist in determining the method of selection. The guidelines for the formation of the council suggested that the method of having the administration select members "should be avoided to circumvent criticism that group is hand picked."

Greenville, S.C.

The Greenville, S.C., board of trustees selects members of the citizens advisory committee from nominations submitted by the PTA, faculty, area assistant superintendent, retiring committee members and any interested community group in each school zone. The list of nominees provides names, addresses, telephone numbers, employment and race of the candidates.

Nashville, Tenn.

Nashville, Tenn., has similar procedures for selecting members, with this proviso designed to assure a representative committee:

"In the event organizational representation does not achieve a committee composition of equal numbers of minority and nonminority persons, at least 50% who are parents whose children will be directly affected by the project to be carried out, the board shall appoint such persons from the community to accomplish this quality of committee composition."

Rockford, Ill.

Any interested Rockford, Ill., community resident may register to serve on an advisory committee and the board selects advisors from this master list. An effort is made to include factions who might oppose one particular program, for example sex education.

San Diego, Calif.

In San Diego, Calif., citizens advisory committees established under state, federal or other nondistrict agencies are elected as specified in the special project. In all other elementary and secondary schools the citizens advisory committees are elected according to the following provisions:

At least two student members are appointed annually by procedures established by school student body organization. An *ad hoc* citizen election committee of five parents plans, establishes rules, conducts and validates the election. The committee is appointed by the elected citizens advisory committee. Procedures for elections developed by the *ad hoc* election committees are reviewed and approved by the community relations division.

Citizen members (nonstudent) serve one year and for no more than two consecutive terms, and cannot serve on more than one advisory committee at a time. Members are elected so as to provide reasonable geographic and ethnic representation. No person, however, is excluded from nomination because of race, religion or expressed opinions. No two members of the same family may serve on the same citizens committee.

Nominating meetings are held at the school. Only residents in the school attendance areas are nominated. Parents and citizens in the area are informed of nominating procedures, meetings, election procedures and other information relative to the elections.

The election is by secret ballot at the school at a date and time convenient to most citizens. The ballot lists the candidates in alphabetical order with brief biographical information as well as instructions for marking the vote. In areas where 1% or more of the citizens commonly use a language other than English, the ballots are printed in the second language also.

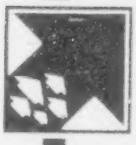
A position is declared vacant when a member misses three successive meetings. The member, however, may remain if approved by a majority vote of the other members. Vacancies are filled by majority vote.

The advisory committee may recommend or ratify other procedures to encourage the election of dynamic and active citizens. Nominations and elections are held in the spring with the first official meeting as soon as practicable following the opening of school in the fall. First item on the agenda is a tentative determination of major projects for the school year, but this doesn't prevent the committee from considering other topics as the need arises.

Fountain Valley, Calif.

Fountain Valley recognizes that no matter how committees are chosen or how representative they are, they will fail if the members are not capable and active. It therefore suggests the following guidelines for considering individual membership:

- An unselfish interest in the public school, the community and every child.
- A willingness to devote the necessary time to this position.



Meetings: Weekly, Monthly, 'As Needed'

The questionnaire replies revealed that only about one-third provide staff for the committee, but clerical and secretarial help is sometimes provided and other staff help as needed. Most committees meet monthly, but the responses varied all the way from "weekly" to 2 to 3 times a year, or "as needed."

- The ability to think objectively and independently about goals.
- A clear recognition of the close relationship necessary between community, the local school staff, students and the educational program.
- The capability of recognizing and distinguishing between the functions of the Board of Trustees, educators, the District Community Council and the School Community Council.
- The ability to withhold judgment on critical goals until all pertinent facts are available.
- A record which has demonstrated consistently that he or she has a respect for others' opinions and for the dignity of each individual.
- A known advocate of the American democratic system.
- Any 6-8 level student may be nominated unless his/her parent or other relative is elected or is appointed a member of the council. Academic achievement will not be a criterion for nomination.

Problems Encountered with CAC's

Respondents identified a variety of problems in working with advisory committees. Their most frequent complaints were:

- Apathy (loss of interest, poor attendance, difficulty of maintaining a high degree of involvement).
- Mechanics of scheduling times and places when everyone can meet.
- Amount of time involved.
- Domination of committee by a few individuals or by "pressure groups."
- Role definition – ensuring committees don't overstep their authority. On the other hand most committees say they don't want to be mere rubber stamps.
- Committee membership should reflect a cross-section of the community.
- Sticking to the point, keeping discussion productive (not going off on irrelevant, personal, or trivial tangents).
- Finding qualified and willing members.
- Need for steady communication, keeping members informed, training them.
- Unworkable, unrealistic recommendations or requests.

Other responses included: reticence, shyness; tedious, slow process; closed-minded people; remembering to use them (the committees); interpreting meaning of what's said; giving too big a task; providing staff.

Despite all these possibilities, several informants reported they had no serious problems! One writer stated that there are problems "only if (the committees are) ignored."

Chapter 2

What Do Committees Advise On?

Initially, a citizens advisory committee was mostly a one-way operation. Committees explained school programs to the public and generated support for bond issues, tax levies and new programs. Gradually, the committee's value as a sounding board for community interests and concerns became apparent. Today many districts make use of committees both to inform the public and to feed back public sentiment.

Although a public relations function is inherently characteristic of all citizens advisory committees, they additionally concern themselves with a wide variety of specific topics. Committees to generate support for capital improvement bond issues or an increase in the tax levy are among the oldest and most widely used, as are advisory committees to oversee construction of buildings.

Vocational Education Was Early Concern

The field of vocational education probably has the longest history of mandated advisory committees. Vocational education committees usually serve rather precise functions; they provide technical expertise, sources of equipment, jobs for graduates or for students in work-study programs. Committee members generally come from local business and industry. In vocational education, at least, the rationale for a close liaison between the schools and business/industry was apparent: specific jobs required specific skills and the best way for educators to know what training to give was to invite the businessman/industrialist to help plan the curriculum.

Curriculum, Finance Occupy Many CAC's

Many districts now have advisory committees that consider curriculum for new programs or special programs, such as those for gifted students, or potentially controversial ones, such as sex education. Curriculum advisory committees usually are constituted on a local school level, but this varies with the size of the district.

Districtwide committees tend to concern themselves with setting long-range goals, recommending policy, establishing priorities or assessing needs.

Advisory committees on finance are common. Many of them are *ad hoc* groups established to advise on and then promote a budget that will result in a millage raise. In some districts, they do more. Nashville, Tenn., for example, has budget advisory committees at the school level and they participate in the actual preparation of the budget.

Dallas, Tex., entered into an agreement with the local Chamber of Commerce to have the chamber provide a task force of experts to review all of the schools' business procedures, and it made recommendations for improvement and economy.

Other topics which have concerned advisory committees include:

- Evaluating federal programs
- Transportation
- Integration
- Lunch programs
- Use of school facilities
- Adult education
- Purchase of equipment

Less frequently, citizens committees have advised on staffing and recommended salary scales. Many districts have several advisory committees, some continuing, some *ad hoc*, operating in a

variety of areas. Fremont, Calif., for example, has had advisory committees on family life education, the budget, public relations, discipline, student dress code, vocational education, federal projects and the year-round school.

In Cherry Hill, N.J., committees have been formed for short-term projects such as studying enrollment projections and studying rooftop heating. A committee has also conducted a township needs assessment to determine school goals.

In Franklin Square, N.Y., committees have studied teacher salary structure and purchasing specifications.

In Warren, Ohio, a committee on business procedures served as a little Hoover Commission, while a citizens' task force made recommendations on quality integrated education.

Curriculum study, building program, policy development and drugs were among matters on which committees in Reynolds School District, Troutdale, Ore., offered advice.

Specific charges are written for six to eight subcommittees each year on matters such as community relations, legislation, school lunch program, transportation and health education in Garden City, N.Y.

Citizens committees frequently "lobby" to get legislation favorable to education passed by the state legislature. This is one of the functions of a committee in the Pleasant Valley Community School District, Iowa. In Wayne (N.Y.) Central School District No. 1 (3,900 pupils), a committee reviews state and federal aid to education bills and investigates ways of relieving the financial strain on district taxpayers.

In Jenison (Mich.) Public Schools, a citizens advisory subcommittee is exploring the feasibility of developing a community education program which includes, but goes beyond, traditional adult education.

In Redwood, Calif., local school advisory councils have dealt with such problems as recruiting more black staff members for the school newspaper, solving the school's litter problem, and determining whether the school's campus should be closed.

While not a designed role, many citizens advisory committees serve as training grounds for future board of education members. Some citizens advisory committees are specifically charged with finding candidates for the board of education. In the Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Elementary School District No. 89, the Citizens Advisory Council is charged, among other things, with trying to interest "qualified citizens in becoming board of education candidates."

Integration and Discipline Problems

Student behavior, often relating to integration problems, has occupied many advisory committees recently – which illustrates how a particular need can spur formation of a citizens advisory committee. To facilitate human awareness activities and desegregation implementation in the 1972-73 school year, the Dallas Independent School District set up several advisory groups, among them parent dialogue groups and community awareness councils, at each secondary school. Guidelines for the Dallas parent dialogue groups suggest that they "should be made up of multi-ethnic/racial mix of parents who are interested in getting together to discuss concerns or anticipated problems, with a view toward working out solutions that will assist them and their children in making adjustments. The PTA should promote the parent dialogue groups as a means of helping parents to become informed regarding offerings and expectations in a school for multi-ethnic/racial students." The groups may discuss any broad areas of concern identified by the principal or raise their own. They may function informally, but are called together by the PTA under the guidance of the principal.

Dallas' community awareness councils "anticipate integration problems and plan for their elimination before they arise." Each council includes representatives from the student body, faculty, PTA, nonaffiliated patrons of the school zone, and the principal.

In Nashville, Tenn., a task force on discipline, which contained lay representation, identified a prominent cause of discipline problems – a breakdown of communications between school and home:

"The relationship between the home and the school has deteriorated to the point that parents and schools no longer have common understandings and expectations in regard to learning or behavior. Traditional channels of communication and interaction between the schools and the general community have not been adequate with the resulting frustration, misunderstandings and conflicts from both groups." The task force recom-

mended that each school principal establish an advisory group of students, parents and teachers in each school to develop local school plans and procedures governing behavior in school.

Nashville, an 87,000-pupil system, also involved an 80-member districtwide advisory committee to develop guidelines and procedures for integration. Subsequently, another committee with 100 citizens was named to make a comprehensive study of school programs and to develop long range improvement plans emphasizing integration.

Citizens Advisory Committees in the Alfred I. DuPont School District, Wilmington, Del., which help identify both problem and "plus" areas, also conducted a discipline study in each of the schools in the 1972-73 school year.

Transportation Is an Old Standby

Bloomfield, a suburb of Hartford, Conn., uses citizens advisory committees to discuss traditionally touchy matters as well as to investigate new programs, and to generate better community relations. The town has six "standing committees," and *ad hoc* committees are appointed as the need arises. For example, an *ad hoc* committee was set up for the sole purpose of establishing new district lines for the elementary schools.

One of Bloomfield's standing advisory committees helps set school transportation policy. Its charge reads in part:

"The committee shall be concerned with all aspects of school transportation and pupil safety" in regard to the following:

- Elimination of traffic hazards
- Sidewalk needs and priorities
- Walking distances to schools
- Walking distances to junctions or pickup points.

In addition to the above, the committee developed a policy booklet establishing all board of education policies concerning transportation. This committee consisted of one member of the board of education appointed by the chairman, at least five citizens of the town named by the board and the school business manager.

Family Living Studied by Many

Family living courses, one of the many names for instructional programs that cover sex education, can create problems if not well handled. For instance, the Cranford, N.J., schools launched a successful K-12 program in family living/human growth and development after an advisory committee, school staff and the board joined efforts and ironed out their differing views.

Decentralization, Consolidation Spur Committees

In many large cities advisory committees have been formed to facilitate decentralization. In fact, an integral part of decentralization plans is the establishment of citizens committees at each of the local schools to provide local control and participation. Citizens advisory committees have also been used in small, rural districts to achieve the opposite effect: consolidation. The intent is the same as in decentralization: to provide a means whereby the smaller communities can share in close control of the school district. Consequently, when several small communities merge into one school district, advisory committees serve to represent each of the individual towns. These committees often are established by law, giving them a governmental status, although their powers are still largely advisory, with the right to make decisions still belonging to the board of education. Frequently, a board of education member serves as chairman for his community's advisory committee.

Shawnee Mission (Kan.) Public School District 512 is a case in point. Shawnee Mission unified in 1969 when 12 elementary and one high school district merged.

A seven-member board of education and 5 four-member advisory boards were established to serve the 72-square mile area. According to David H. Westbrook, director of information services, the advisory boards serve as liaison between their communities and the board of education. Their functions are limited to advising. They meet monthly and receive reports from building principals and staffs about individual school activities and programs. The board of education receives all districtwide curriculum and management reports. Each advisory board is chaired by the area board of

education member who, with the area assistant superintendent, plans agenda and coordinates reports. Board of education members are elected to serve four-year terms. Advisory board members serve two-year terms.

Title I Committees Have Clout

Parent advisory committees formed in response to Title I, ESEA, guidelines can legally exercise more clout than most other advisory committees, since the law requires their approval of project proposals and gives them the authority to evaluate ongoing programs. In Pontiac, Mich., the Area Wide Advisory Committee (AWAC), which is the citizen advisory group for Title I, plays a large role in the operation of the Title I programs. Subcommittees pass on job descriptions and job qualifications, screen candidates for project positions, periodically review the budget, conduct a quarterly evaluation and develop new ideas and programs. To evaluate Title I programs, a monitoring system was set up. The procedures were described as follows:

"A monitoring team of parents from the Title I area will make periodic on-site visits of the various Title I programs. Each team member will receive training in the use of a checklist. This checklist will include the following factors: major objectives of the program; description of program activities related to the accomplishment of stated objectives; person identified to conduct and participate in the program; materials to be used in the program.

"Each monitoring team member while observing the programs will note on the checklist the particular activities taking place, the people involved, and the materials used. It is anticipated that the monitoring team will meet with each program director prior to on-site visits. Each team member has been assigned to one school, thus one person will monitor all programs in a particular school."

Committees Spread Information, Counter Critics

Advisory committees can help counter attacks by isolated groups or extremists and blunt the impact of a vocal few with an ax to grind. Mrs. Celia D. Hendrix, administrative assistant for staff communications in Greenville County (S.C.) School District, relates this experience:

"The spread of representation gives a broad range of opinions concerning crucial issues. One good example was the recent attack on the Greenville County Schools by a group of citizens who voiced vehement objections to certain selected books in school libraries. The Area Citizens Advisory Committees studied the district policy on selection of materials, visited school libraries, talked with many individuals and, through a representative subcommittee, formulated recommendations for the board. The board unanimously adopted the recommendations and the administration moved immediately toward implementation."

A Citizens Lay Advisory Committee (CLAC) has operated in Ritenour School District, Overland, Mo., since 1954. Patty Williamson, director of public relations, says of the members: "Their sensitivity and understanding of educational goals and problems is a help in interpreting such things to the community and in obtaining both positive and negative feedback. They are also one of our biggest assets in levy and bond campaigns. Their endorsements often carry weight in school board elections."

CLAC's first project in Ritenour was to make a plea for sidewalks along dangerous streets near the schools. Other projects have included sponsorship of a scholarship plan for future teachers, and of the United Parents Committee – aimed at giving black and white parents an opportunity to meet informally with principals and district administrators.

In Colts Neck, N.J., Supt. Roy J. Unger set up a home-school discussion group to facilitate communications. The nine citizen members are encouraged to report to their friends and neighbors on the meetings. Items discussed have included the school newsletter, effectiveness of board members as communicators, hiring of a public relations specialist, posture of the schools as welcoming agencies, the influence of local groups and the image of the PTA.

The council has also concerned itself with school lunch program, pros and cons of seat belts in school buses, students' performance on standardized tests, teacher aides, diagnosing and teaching to individual differences. Speaking to such realistic, everyday concerns of parents is one of the primary purposes of any citizens advisory group.

Green Bay (Wis.) District Public Schools have a parent advisory board for a community newsletter

Spontaneous Committees Wither— Unless Supported

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A development rarely mentioned or documented in the literature on advisory committees is that of the spontaneous or ad hoc committee. Such a committee starts out enthusiastically on its own, gradually falters and eventually withers away. Why does this happen?

- Lack of agreement and/or clear understanding among members regarding the goals and objectives of the group. Some members may have a generalized feeling of dissatisfaction with the schools and want more "say" in their children's education while other members want to zero in on one or more specific school practices they wish changed.
- Composition of the committee may cause immediate problems. Some members may envision a broadly based, ideologically representative body while others insist on seeking improvements with a small group of educated and sophisticated community leaders; a third group is seeking a committee of "kindred spirits."
- Disagreement among members about the action which is needed to effect change. Some members of the group look for swift and aggressive action through a frontal attack on the school system, while others may urge caution, emphasizing the establishment of good will and the collection of facts and evidence before approaching the school administration or board of education.
- Personality conflicts.
- The use of the committee by individuals for personal aggrandizement.
- Lack of skill and knowledge on the part of members about either the educational enterprise or techniques for effective committee work.
- Overambitious goals; unreasonable expectations.
- Jumping in feet first with hastily planned proposals (unsupported by facts).
- A cool reception or outright hostility by school board or school administration.

The demise of a grass-root committee, however ill conceived or managed, is no cause for rejoicing by school people. The causes that spawned them probably still exist; the committee members, whether cooperative or troublesome, still exist; and the very failure of the committee and its objectives can provide the basis for further disturbance.

In many areas, school administrators and board members have responded cooperatively and enthusiastically to the efforts of citizens to start advisory committees. And where the school administration has cooperated in establishing ground rules and goals and in providing facts, figures, aid and encouragement to citizens as they try to form an advisory group, the outcome generally has been favorable on both sides.

which was established, said public information director Ann Weizenegger, to give parents the types of information they wanted about the schools.

Principals select a parent delegate and alternate to represent each school for one year. The parents are told to bring in questions about schools they and their friends want answered. The superintendent and public information director always meet with the committee prior to the preparation of each issue of the newsletter, which comes out three times a year. "Feedback from parents has been invaluable," Miss Weizenegger says. "We feel the newsletter content is now more pertinent and the news selection job easier. Furthermore, the two-way communication at the meetings has served to quell rumors and point the way to other needed communication efforts."

Green Bay also has six vocational education advisory committees, a Title III, ESEA, reading project advisory council and Title I parent advisory committees, selected by principals, at target schools.

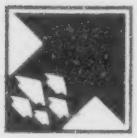
Lee's Summit, Mo.: A Typical Experience

Supt. Bernard C. Campbell of Lee's Summit, Mo., describes fairly typical experiences of districts this size. Lee's Summit is a K-12 system, serving 5,900 pupils in nine schools. Campbell says the Board of Education has encouraged the formation of citizens committees to study special school problems within the district. The school building advisory committee, originated after the district was reorganized in 1949, studies enrollment predictions and building needs. "Since 1951 the school district has voted 10 bond issues without failure, all requiring a two-thirds majority. The citizens committee has recommended each of these bond issues. . . . The advisory committee has been updated each two years. (Current membership is 175.) This is as often as we have presented bond issues to the voters. We believe it is necessary to appoint a true cross section of the people in the district."

In addition, a board-appointed curriculum study committee set the tone for the district's program and expansion during the 1960s, after a two-year study. Another committee of 106 members studied the district's offerings for three years, submitting its report in February 1972.

"The curriculum committee held its first joint meeting with the board of education, organized and divided into subcommittees for study of the district's curriculum. It was explained to the committee at the beginning that the extent of the committee's authority was advisory only. We have never had any problems with the committee usurping the board's authority. No member of the board of education or professional staff had committee status. However, all members of the staff were subject to being called as resource people for the committee. Secretarial work was furnished through the office of the superintendent. The board paid for and furnished outside consultants as needed for the subcommittees. The various subcommittees met at different times and filed their reports with the general committee. The final report was subject to the approval of the entire committee," Campbell said.

Chapter 3



The Advisory Committee As Ombudsman

To the extent that citizens advisory committees provide two-way communication they also act as ombudsmen. Some districts, however, have formalized the ombudsman concept as a specific function of their advisory committees.

Parkrose Schools, Portland, Ore.: A Formalized Role

Parkrose School District #3, Portland, Ore., has formalized the ombudsman role of its advisory committees at both the building and district levels.

At the building level, members are appointed for two-year terms by the board of education acting on recommendations from the principals and the advisory committee itself. Members must be selected from all segments of the community. An officer of the school's parent-teacher organization, a teacher elected by the staff, and the principal, who is a permanent member, also serve. At the elementary level, the committee must consist of at least eight citizens, a teacher and the principal; at the secondary level, 10 citizens, a student, a teacher, the principal and an assistant principal make up the committee.

The district level advisory council membership consists of two building advisory committee members elected by each of the 10 committees (one for each high school) to serve for two years, plus the superintendent and assistant superintendent as permanent members. All committees and the council are required to meet monthly September through June.

Policy states that building advisory committees "may seek to answer complaints of patrons of the attendance area or district. Complaints about individual employes shall be handled directly with the principal or through the principal to the superintendent and the board of education."

The districtwide advisory council seeks "to answer complaints referred to members by patrons of the district."

Both councils handle complaints and criticisms in the following prescribed way:

- Complaints and criticisms are communicated in writing to the advisory committees at the next regular meeting by the member who receives them. To expedite the process, it is permissible for the committee member to forward the complaint in written form to the principal at any time between meetings. This way the answers are often available to the committee when it meets.

- In no instance is an answer forwarded to the complainant until the advisory committee has had an opportunity to hear the case and the answer furnished by the principal or other district official.

- The name and address of the complainant is secured, if possible. If he wishes to remain anonymous, the advisory committee member is responsible for getting the answer back to him. The complaint, however, is presented to the advisory committee and the principal in written form with the name of the advisory committee member.

- Advisory committee members *do not* investigate in the schools directly. *The principal must be informed at all times.*

- Answers to complaints are written by the principal and signed by the committee chairman.

- When the solutions or explanations indicate

that the building policies or procedures should be changed, the advisory committee can act at the building level. If the problem can only be solved by a change in district policy, the recommendation to accomplish the change is forwarded in writing to the districtwide citizens advisory council.

- If the complaint is sent directly to the council, it is forwarded to the appropriate building committee. If the complaint can be handled at the district level, the same procedures as outlined for the building committees are followed.

- When a complaint concerns an individual employe it is submitted in writing and signed. The written complaint is then given to the principal – not through the advisory committee – for him to investigate. If satisfaction is not gained, the matter can be referred to the superintendent and the board of education.

Armada, Mich.: Formalized Grievance Procedure

Armada, Mich., area schools provide parents' advisory committees (PACs) with procedures for processing "recommendations, complaints, suggestions and grievances." As at Parkrose, the ultimate power to act on any grievance rests with the board of education. In Armada, the advisory committees were established in compliance with state requirements and federal requirements under Title I, ESEA. Members, who serve one year, are selected by the board of education from lists of volunteers. Only parents of children in either Title I or state aid schools may serve. Committees must have at least 13 and no more than 25 members, of which 50% must be parents. School representatives on the committee must include special programs director, elementary principal, reading program director and at least three appointed school employes, one of whom may be a member of the board of education.

All recommendations, complaints, suggestions and grievances are presented to the PAC at a special meeting and, if approved by a majority vote of the PAC members present, forwarded to the director of special programs in writing in not less than five days. The director then consults with the project staff and sends a written reply to the president of PAC within ten days.

If the reply is deemed unacceptable by a majority vote of the PAC members present, the communication and the reply is forwarded to the superintendent within five days. The superintendent must reply within ten days. If this reply is deemed unsatisfactory by the PAC upon majority vote, a copy of the grievance and all replies are forwarded to the president of the board of education.

The board conducts a private hearing on the grievance at which both the complaining parties and the project staff present their views in person or in writing. The decision of the board is final and binding.

Jenison, Mich.: Ombudsman and Public Relations Combined

An interesting variation on the themes of both ombudsman and public relations is illustrated by the communications subcommittee of the citizens involvement group for Jenison (Mich.) Public Schools. In January 1972, it took the following action:

"Questions and gripes submitted to the committee were discussed, answered, or referred to the correct source for an answer. Gripes or questions of community interest will be published in a weekly column in *The Grand Valley Shoppers' Guide* under the heading, 'Community Beat.' Individual problems or questions will be answered by telephone. The communications committee will take the approach of keeping information before the public constantly by answering their questions and reporting the findings of each subcommittee."

Chapter 4

Advisory Committees Move To the State Level

Advisory committees at the state level may serve to regenerate state departments as education leaders strive to overcome a credibility gap of increasing proportions. Much of the revitalizing may come via formal state advisory committees or the increased involvement of citizens in accountability and assessment studies.

Exploring this theme before the 1972 convention of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Ohio State Supt. Martin W. Essex gave a vote of confidence to the involvement of "great numbers" of persons in education. By finding out citizens' opinions on the "gut" issues and their recommendations as to solutions, Essex expressed optimism that involvement may help, rather than hinder, the development of better educational programs.

Essex cited the experience of the Akron (Ohio) schools where citizens seminars, large citizens assemblies and town hall meetings at voting time considerably tightened the degree of cohesiveness on school issues, despite wide variations among Akron citizens in the areas of income, religion, ancestral backgrounds, housing and employment. An effort is being made, Essex said, to transfer this type of citizen involvement to the state level in a campaign called "Search for Consensus."

Involvement was the key word in "Search for Consensus," a four-phase, sequential process. As reported by Essex, the campaign operated this way:

- One hundred thousand people in 604 school districts offered opinions in May 1972 on 88 "gut" issues in education. In addition, each group, meeting at the district level, had the option of writing their proposals for resolving the issues.

- The written recommendations, totaling 12,500 plus the opinions expressed on 56,000 questionnaires returned by the local groups, were categorized into 10 "priorities for the management of education" and presented before 88 county citizens seminars in October 1972.

- In the third phase, 12 regional assemblies were called in February 1973 to study the citizens' concerns and to suggest ways to achieve those goals designated by the citizens as appropriate and necessary for Ohio schools. The goals and means of achieving them were submitted to four seminars which brought together, among others, members of PTAs and school board organizations. In the meantime, the Ohio State Dept. of Education prepared a position paper on the redesign of education in Ohio and on an accountability model, as mandated by the General Assembly. The position paper broke concerns into five areas, all of which will figure in the redesign of education in Ohio: teacher education, governance of education, adjusting the curriculum, school community relations and student programming.

- The fourth phase of the "Search for Consensus" brought 1,500 persons, the majority of them lay citizens, to the state capital for a full day of discussion. The citizens gave their reactions to the State Dept.'s position paper and the accountability model. On the basis of their suggestions, the State Dept. enacted a resolution to start the redesign process by restructuring teacher education in the state. College deans, PTA representatives, school board members and school administrators will be involved in the process. In addition, the accountability model was readied for presentation to the General Assembly.

Essex told CCSSO members this is the only way Ohio, and, by inference, other states have to go: "The challenge of educational statesmanship is clearly before us. If we accept the premise that the schools belong to the people and that the people feel that the schools have been moved too far from their ability to influence the school management, can the state agency – from whence the new direction in funding is centered and the new level of leadership must emerge – design a process to attain both direction and empathy? This is the rationale for the 'Search for Consensus' in Ohio."

Minnesota: Meeting a Specific Need

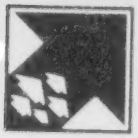
Another example of state involvement with local citizens focused on a specific problem – racial understanding – through help and direction given to local intercultural education advisory committees. As reported by Archie Holmes, director of equal educational opportunities for the state of Minnesota, 222 districts formed intercultural advisory committees, and 253 districts assigned responsibility for program implementation to a staff person. But the state still had an important part to play in making clear to the federally mandated advisory committees the scope of their role.

Holmes' section conducted 21 regional workshops in 1972 to help districts implement the desegregation guidelines which related to intercultural education and to formation of local advisory committees. Specifically, the workshops concentrated on: evaluating textbooks and planning curriculum, teaching methods and skills to promote intercultural understanding in the classroom, using intercultural audiovisuals, and implementing and administering local programs.

As a result, the local advisory committees concentrate on the following areas:

- Inservice training for teachers.
- Evaluation of texts and instructional materials.
- Acquisition of library materials and selection of audiovisual aids.
- Formation of cultural resource centers.

Chapter 5



The Problems and the Pluses

The tremendous growth of citizens advisory committees is widely hailed as a beneficial forward step; but, as in any enterprise so massive and so relatively new, problems exist. What are the most frequently recurring problems, and how are citizens and schoolmen attempting to cope with them?

Apathy: No. 1 Obstacle

Apathy? How can it be that a program that sprang in large part from grass-roots agitation, from vocal, demanding protest, should suffer from disinterest and lack of involvement?

As activists see it, citizens are eager to become involved in their schools and only await the chance. Yet school officials attempting to set up citizens advisory committees identify apathy as their number one obstacle.

Samuel M. Burt, of American U.'s College of Continuing Education, blamed educators for the generally prevailing current lack of effective citizen participation and involvement in the schools. "As professionals, Burt said, "educators have the responsibility for providing the necessary receptive climate as well as leadership for community participation."

He also identified "an arsenal of strategies" educators use to discourage involvement and, in a sense, encourage apathy: "Appointment of an endless number of *ad hoc* study groups, vilification of the groups' leaders, refusal to meet with such groups, and simply ignoring their existence."

A less severe critic, Jack Minzey, director of Eastern Michigan U.'s Center for Community Education, writing in the November 1972 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*, suggested that the failure of meaningful citizen involvement does not rest entirely with the educator:

"The fact is that democracy does not work automatically. It is the most difficult and time-consuming social system to achieve. Among requirements are an appropriate size for interaction and organization, and constant stimuli."

As Minzey suggests, it is unlikely that professional intransigence is the sole cause of public apathy. A check of voting patterns in nearly any community will show that school board elections generate the smallest number of votes. If getting people to vote once or twice a year is difficult, how much more difficult is it to get citizens to attend quarterly, monthly or weekly meetings? And getting attendance is only half the battle. Participants are also expected to do considerable homework, serve on subcommittees and carry information back to their neighborhoods.

How To Combat Apathy

Many educators recognize the problem of apathy and attempt to deal with it creatively in order to prevent their advisory committees from being mere paper organizations passively fulfilling the letter of state or federal requirements. In Green Bay, Wis., for example, John Sewell, director of federal programs, explains a shift from using Title I staffers to using parents in a "calling committee" to encourage other parents to attend meetings.

"It should be understood," Sewell says, "that disadvantaged parents are easily discouraged from active participation. Their involvement has grown with our gradual development of relevant programs for both the children and parents. Success then encourages more successful parent involvement."

Disadvantaged parents are the ones who most need to be drawn into many citizens advisory programs in order to provide input from segments of the community that have for too long been

unheard. But disadvantaged parents share all the obstacles which other parents have to attending regular meetings, plus some of their own: holding down two jobs to make ends meet; rearing a family as a single parent; lacking transportation. When people fail to attend a meeting, those who do the arranging and planning tend to feel resentful and annoyed. This is a natural reaction, and it's all too easy to attribute the poor attendance to lack of interest: "See, they really just don't care." That, however, would be a serious miscalculation for anyone who sincerely wants community advisory committees. People need to be reminded that there are a dozen legitimate and unavoidable reasons for not attending a meeting even when one is deeply concerned with the business of the meeting. Both citizens and educators need to try to identify those reasons, and do what they can to get around them.

One relatively simple and practical technique used by some districts is to offer rides or arrange carpools. This should be done somewhat systematically and not left to chance or to informal arrangements. Besides the obvious benefit of providing transportation, this technique also offers the more subtle inducement of providing companions with whom to attend meetings – a particularly important consideration when the committee is composed of people from a wide variety of cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Payments and Penalties

A small number of committees offer monetary compensation to members, sometimes in the form of reimbursement for babysitters. The constitution of the Parent Advisory Committee of the Armada (Mich.) Area Schools, established under Title I, ESEA, provides that "all PAC members will receive a stipend for their attendance at special meetings at the rate of $5.00 per meeting, but not to exceed $20.00 per year. This will be a part of inservice training costs and so designated in the operational budgets. There shall be no compensation for interim meetings or general meetings." (The constitution elsewhere states that at least four special meetings shall be held yearly, interim meetings may be called when necessary, and at least two general meetings shall be held yearly.)

The constitution also provides that "PAC parent-members who are designated by the committee to attend workshops, clinics or conferences outside of the district shall be reimbursed for transportation, lodging, fees and meal costs. School personnel attending such activities shall likewise be reimbursed." Such reimbursement for expenses of special activities is practiced more frequently around the country than is payment of a stipend for attendance at regular meetings.

Where district finances or policies preclude payment for babysitters so that parents may attend meetings, an energetic committee can still mobilize a corps of volunteer babysitters from among high school students.

Many districts attempt to combat the problem of poor attendance by specifying in committee by-laws that failure to attend three consecutive meetings means loss of committee membership, unless a majority vote indicates the committee is satisfied the absences were for good and sufficient reason. Evidence would indicate that this may be a necessary provision, but like all negative sanctions, its usefulness is limited. Successful committees recommend the following as more productive ways of maintaining a high level of citizen interest and involvement: a well planned agenda, distributed in advance; assigning meaningful tasks that really concern parents, not trivial details; remembering to *use* the committees and pay attention to their recommendations; learning how to give direction in discussions, for purposes of communication and staying on the track.

A Question of Identity

"Definition of roles" is one of the most frequently mentioned problems in working with advisory committees. Many respondents to the *Education U.S.A.* survey approached the idea from the other direction, making such comments as "No problems if committee understands its role."

William J. Banach, director of information services for Rochester (Mich.) Community Schools, wrote: "Definition of role is the largest problem. Some individuals find it hard to accept the fact that their work and recommendations will not necessarily be totally accepted." And from Lind, Wash., Supt. E. Dewayne Gower cited as a problem: "Helping them understand clearly that their role is advisory and that upon completion of the task they shall no longer function."

Boards of education have long recognized the problems that can arise when roles are unclear. In

fact, many school district handbooks state that "advisory committees should be appointed only when there is a definite function to be performed. This function should be clearly explained to the committee in writing. As soon as the job is completed, the committee should either be dissolved or given a new specific assignment. No committee shall be allowed to continue for prolonged periods without a definite assignment. Final decision on any recommendation rests with the board of education."

Common sense indicates that any group, in order to function effectively, must understand its purpose and objectives, as well as the scope and limitations of its activities. A clear definition of roles, then, would seem to be an unarguable and elementary necessity for businesslike procedure.

Who's Afraid of the CAC?

Role definition touches on several sensitive points, and opens up two important problem areas. The first concerns fears of some board of education members that advisory committees will try to usurp their role – "They want to take over," is the way many board members react. This fear is the reason for the many board policies and committee bylaws that reiterate in no uncertain terms that the advisory committee is the creature of the board, that it serves only at the will of the board, that it may not speak for the schools or may not even speak publicly for itself without the consent of the board.

The board and the administrator may need to help the committee and it must in fact be help, not control. In addition, it must be given carefully so as to avoid any appearance of dominating the committee. Otherwise, its effectiveness is severely curtailed, and the amount of credibility the committee generates with the public is no greater than that of the board or administrators.

Avoiding hostile groups may only intensify problems. Many educators and boards today actively seek out critics, operating on the philosophy that the best way to lose enemies is to make them friends. On another level, wise boards are responding in a practical way, realizing that critics will probably be organized anyway, so they might as well be organized within the establishment.

Boards must also realize that there have always been individuals bent on personal or political aggrandizement who will try to use any organization relating to the schools as a foothold to gain political power. Such people sometimes try to exploit whatever is available, be it citizens advisory committees or PTAs. Although such opportunists are a familiar phenomenon on the educational scene, it would be a mistake to become resigned to them; the damage they do to both the educational enterprise itself and to the delicate fabric of school-community relations can be very great.

The Anti-Establishment Cry

A somewhat more recent phenomenon, however, that may pose a threat, whether real or imagined, to the authority of boards of education is the formation of groups alienated from the political and educational "establishment." The groups – perhaps not large in proportion to the population, but growing, and very articulate – believe sincerely and even passionately that the authority of boards of education *should* be counterbalanced by some authority vested in local parent-citizen groups.

This movement is particularly apparent in large metropolitan centers. A survey conducted by the Center for Governmental Studies in 1970 tried to discover the extent of community control in the districts queried. The survey, *Community Participation in Public Elementary Schools: A Survey Report*, defined control as: "having an affirmative or negative (veto) role in decision making." The report stated: "Of the 413 school districts responding, 44, or slightly over 1 out of 10, indicated that parents and/or community representatives have control of at least one function in one or more elementary schools.

"After-school programs for children and other community uses of school facilities are the functions most frequently controlled – in 25 and 20 districts, respectively. Examples of parent/community control of curriculum adoption and budget preparation were found in five districts, and control of discipline, site selection and building design in four."

No full control over selection of principals or teachers was reported. However, in Washington, D.C., neighborhood boards have partial control of personnel selection in several schools, and in New York City community boards at the subsystem level (groups of schools) have partial control of

hiring. Four other school districts reported community control over selection of aides in some, though not all, of the elementary schools in the district.

Whether one considers the trend toward advisory councils a threat or a step in the right direction will depend on one's social, political and educational philosophy. But there are factors on the other side that operate to counterbalance the trend. Certainly the whole weight of law and governmental structure, is on the side of boards of education having complete control of schools. This is still the picture in the great majority of the nation's school districts.

A number of research studies on school-community conflict were summarized by John T. Seyforth in a U.S. Office of Education PREP Report on *School and Community Conflict.* He concludes: "The effort by community groups to secure greater control over neighborhood schools in urban areas promises to continue to produce conflict between school authorities . . . and the public. . . . It seems unlikely that boards of education will grant the absolute authority that some community groups are seeking, but it is likely that there will be movement in the direction of greater decentralization in many of the large cities."

Absence of Committees No Boon

Those who fear citizens advisory committees as a source of trouble or overt conflict should realize that the *absence* of a committee is no guarantee that school-community relations will run smoothly. In fact, the absence of any channel for citizen input into the schools may itself be a focal point for complaint and agitation. Citizens committees may express dissatisfaction with the schools, but they seldom create it. For every case where a citizens committee is the focal point of overt community conflict or trouble, other cases can be cited where the citizens advisory committee played the role of peacemaker or problem solver, or prevented the situation from becoming explosive in the first place. The overwhelming majority of respondents to the *Education U.S.A.* survey reported good to excellent relations between their boards of education and advisory committees. Comments included: "Great – mutual confidence and understanding of their respective roles" . . . "Very positive and increasingly close and direct" . . . "Our school board relies on them to a large extent and sincerely listens to their advice" . . . "Very cordial and cooperative".

The administrator and board that make no effort to involve citizens, or involve them only in a window-dressing role, sooner or later pay the piper either in steady loss of support or a cataclysmic outbreak. The outbreak might be the less destructive result, because it often generates an immediate and positive reaction. The steady erosion of confidence, however, may be accompanied by an out-migration of families in a search for better schools. This can destroy a system's morale and effectiveness so thoroughly that it will require years of concentrated effort and money to restore its quality.

The Committee V. the Professionals

A second broad problem area opened up by the question of role definition concerns the delineation of advisory committees' roles vis-a-vis the professional staff. Even when the relations between committees and boards of education are cordial and neither feels threatened by the other, the relation between professionals and lay advisory committees may still be somewhat strained and even suspicious. Respondents to the *Education U.S.A.* survey emphasized the importance of role clarification. Likewise, USOE's PREP report concluded:

> "In a study of 85 school districts having lay advisory groups there is considerable support for the use of lay committees. However, laymen and professionals differed on how they should be used for curricular development. Professionals placed the greatest emphasis on a need for clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, whereas laymen expressed more concern for sound curriculum consideration."

Many parents and citizens, concerned about making positive contributions to improving the schools, look upon the preoccupation with definition of roles as just another means of thwarting any meaningful parent participation – which creates a genuine dilemma for the school. Without a reasonably clear idea of its role, an advisory committee may waste time, duplicate efforts or deal in irrelevancies. On the other hand, a narrow definition of responsibilities can emasculate an advisory committee, and a fussy, legalistic insis-

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

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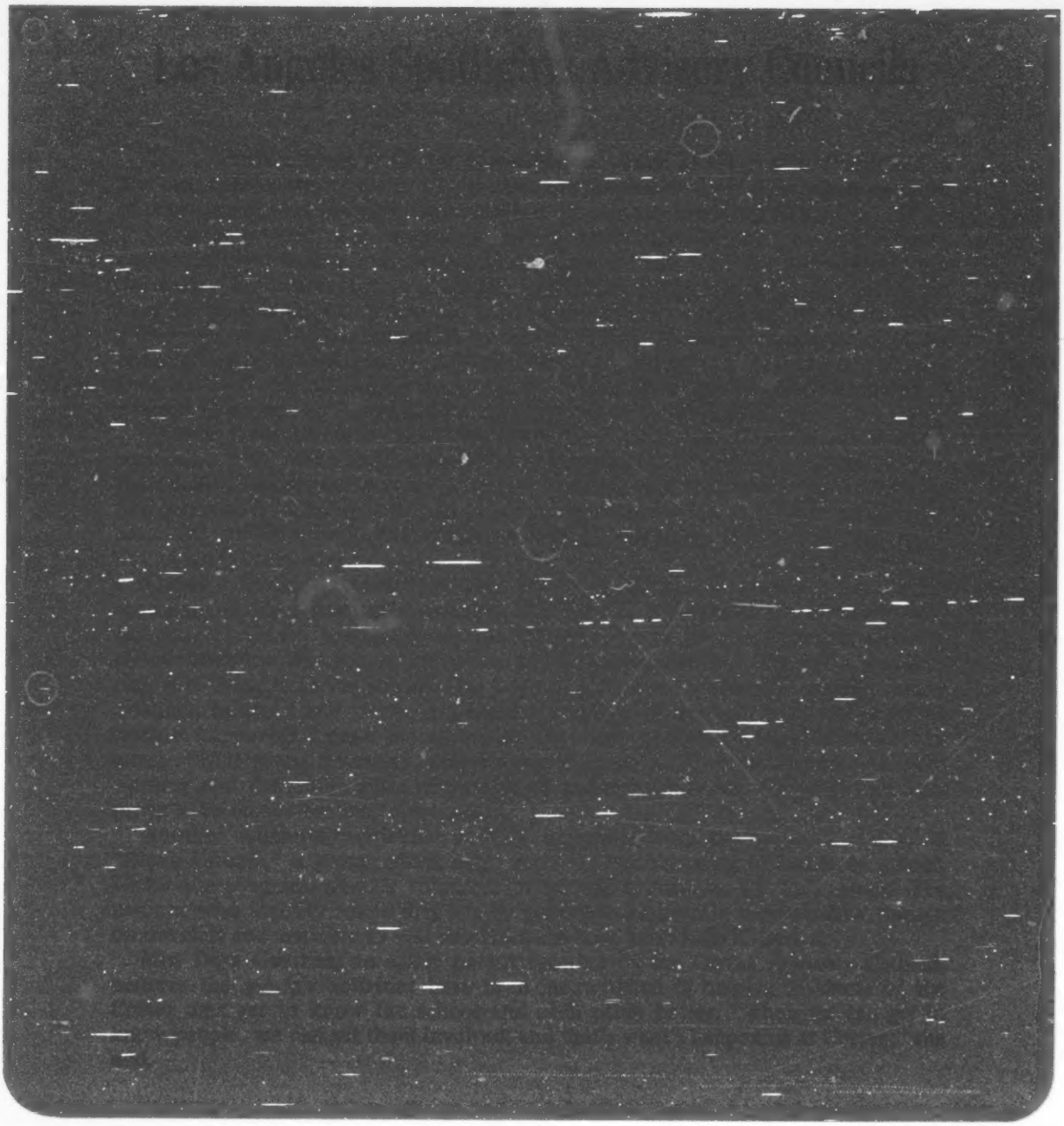


tence on performing only a preassigned role is one ploy that may be used by a hostile administration to ensure a "rubber stamp" committee.

Mutual Respect Is the Key

There is no simple formula for escaping this dilemma. The only real solution lies in the motives and intent of the people involved – on both sides. Where mutual trust and respect exist, the definition of the advisory committee's role should present no great problem. On the other hand, if committee members chronically engage in witch-hunting and ax-grinding, or if educators feel threatened by or contemptuous of the parents and citizens, the battle over the committee's role is apt to become the biggest issue of all.

How can a climate of mutual trust and respect be created? It does not happen overnight, and it requires efforts on both sides. But – whether rightly or wrongly – public opinion generally holds that the school administration is responsible for creating a favorable climate, precisely because they are full-time professionals, and the initiative is theirs. Citizens will usually trust board members and administrators if they have been trustworthy in the past; i.e., if they have not created a credibility gap by refusing to give out unfavorable information about the schools, or by dealing in half-truths and propaganda. A history of scrupulous honesty and candor in dealing with the public is one of the greatest assets a school system can have toward a successful program of citizens advisory committees.

When teachers and administrators approach parents and citizens as equals, then citizens are likely to return that respect and eschew disruptive tactics. This is not always easy to achieve. For whatever reasons, some educators harbor a deep-seated distrust of the public. For instance, one California administrator cites as a major problem in working with citizens advisory committees: "Obtaining staff cooperation and 'openness' with 'non-professionals.' " A director of communications in Kansas reports, "Some professional staff members have difficulty knowing exactly how to relate to a lay advisory committee." An administrator writes, "They (citizens) do not think as educators – sometimes hard for them to fully understand problems."

Respect for Committee Pays Off

The school administration that is committed to the use of citizens advisory committees needs to nurture attitudes of respect for and openness with people from all walks of life. The beneficial results of successful committees would seem to be well worth the effort. "You must be ready to accept the committee's recommendations and truly value their input or it can be disastrous," says a Wisconsin principal. "If you give them information they will give you good sensible solutions to your problems." A director of special projects in Oregon, though bemoaning the vast amounts of time required, can still enthuse, "The people are marvelous – eager to work with the district to find solutions to district problems."

Divide Labor: Communicate; Cooperate

Once the climate of mutual respect is established, the "definition of roles" becomes more a practical matter of division of labor – assigning tasks to those best able to do them – and establishing clear channels of communication and action. In most school districts with advisory committees, professional staff serve as resource people for the committees, with teachers and administrators called to answer questions, provide detailed information and explain technical points. In some school districts, committees can go directly to teachers and principals; in others, all such requests must be funneled through the central administrative office. Many times a particular staff member is assigned to a committee as a permanent resource person. A slightly different sort of relationship exists in those districts where professional staff serve on the committees, as regular members, coequal with the others. They still are called on, of course, to share their technical knowledge with the committee.

Specific items of role clarification will continue to crop up steadily throughout a committee's work. For instance, a curriculum study committee will turn to the faculty for scholarly background and technical curriculum design, but lay members may offer a great many topical suggestions, as well as identification of their children's needs. Assigning productive areas of operation for both professional and lay people will take some thought, but it should be no great obstacle if the atmosphere of

openness and flexibility has been clearly established.

The Lack of Time

Time, inflexible and insufficient, ranks next to apathy and role definition as key problems in dealing with citizens advisory committees. Educators almost unanimously lament the lack of time to work with advisory committees: no time to orient, no time to meet with, no time to consider carefully the advisory committee recommendations, no time to respond adequately. In small districts, staff and money restrictions tend to increase the problem.

The burden of time demands falls most heavily on school administrators. When there are many committees in a district, and the superintendent, his assistant or principals are expected to meet regularly with each, the number of meeting nights a month for the harried officials can become almost ludicrous. But the time demands are heavy on citizen participants, too – a fact which has direct bearing on the frequent waning of interest among citizens. People begin to drop out when they feel they cannot give the time required.

Simple solutions to this problem are not readily forthcoming: evidence from the survey conducted for this report indicates that most educators are still struggling with it and haven't found the answer. Short of abandoning the whole enterprise, some possible remedies to be explored are:

- Scaling down the scope of the committees' assignments in any one year to more manageable proportions.
- Allowing the superintendent to delegate someone else to attend meetings in his place (not recommended in the early stages of a committee's existence).
- Appointing full-time personnel to work solely with committees in larger districts or where budgets allow.
- Making greater use of inservice training to help members become both more knowledgeable about the schools and more sophisticated in organizational skills and efficiency. (Inservice training itself takes time, but should pay off on the investment in subsequent months and years.)

Besides the problem of the *amount* of time required, many administrators report a less serious but chronically bothersome problem concerning the mechanics of meetings – agreeing on a time when 10 to 20 persons can meet regularly. "Finding convenient times for meetings," was named by one educator as his first problem. Another found, "attendance and follow-through by all members not consistent."

John V. Kilkelly, research communications associate in Merrick (N.Y.) Central High School District #3, summed up the problem as the "Proliferation of arrangement details, meeting places, agendas, minutes, support materials and, possibly, subcommittee rosters." All these things unquestionably add to the headaches of educators and citizen leaders. There is no instant remedy.

Committee Members Need Training

Educators frequently complain that citizens, with their limited backgrounds, lack the knowledge to make advisory committees effective. The changing character of advisory committees magnifies this complaint. Once composed mostly of professionals, businessmen or middle-income persons selected mainly for the help they could give the district, many committees now contain parents of low-income or minority groups seeking a voice in their child's education.

The few evaluations of citizen participation programs corroborate the need for some type of inservice training to make the committees more effective. Evaluations of the well run programs in Los Angeles and San Diego (see pages 36 and 38) stimulated further efforts in those districts to provide such training.

California, a leader in the use of citizens advisory committees, has prepared a *Handbook for California School District Advisory Committees* to help parents prepare for roles on the committees. One chapter discusses how members can train themselves.

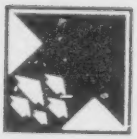
Among other recommendations, the California booklet encourages advisory members to obtain and study the regulations and requirements governing Title I programs. USOE's manual, *Parental Involvement in Title I, ESEA*, notes, "Since Title I is a complicated program with three sets of amendments, three sets of regulations, and more than 70 federal program guides, as well as state

guidelines and policies, it is essential that the LEA (local education agency) plan a training program for parent council members." (School districts may legally use Title I money to provide training for council members.)

The USOE manual recommends giving members an in-depth view of local projects and organizational structures, and involving staff in the training sessions to develop close working relationships. The manual prefers use of local personnel rather than outside consultants for such training, which should be a "long-term, ongoing process." Pointing out the practical need for such training, the manual states, "It is impossible for a parent council to review and make recommendations for a new remedial reading program if the members do not understand the individualized instruction or programmed materials techniques that may be utilized."

The Center for Urban Education in New York City has conducted workshops for parents and community groups in decentralized districts. A course of study to improve the quality of citizen participation on advisory committees has also been prepared by the Urban Educational Development Laboratory of the U. of Illinois. The course, in the form of lesson plans for an instructor's use, covers the nature of citizens advisory councils, organizational structure and authority, formation procedures, internal operations, activities and practices.

Chapter 6



Board Member Cites 'Communications' Value

If an advisory committee is to achieve the purpose for which it is formed – to give advice – and, in doing so, to prove its own worth, it must have the support of the school's administrators and school board.

On the other hand, the school board cannot ask for help and support of citizens if it rejects, without consideration, the advice and offers of help from the interested few who serve on the citizens advisory committee. This is the view explored by Donald R. Baer, a school board member in the Alfred L. duPont School District, Wilmington, Del. Baer explained the approach used in his district in an address before the 1973 annual convention of the National School Boards Assn. While recognizing the problems or inconveniences some advisory committees cause, Baer stresses that the school board needs to be "in touch" with the community. A citizens advisory committee provides real live contact.

Baer's speech, in abridged form, follows:

. . . If one is to get full value from an advisory committee, then the advice from the committee must be of good quality. However, advice is of no use unless it is heeded by the recipient. A Board of Education must recognize that when advice is sought, and advisory committees are appointed, it must be done with a sincerity of purpose and a firm dedication that the feedback will be considered with an open mind, even if the advice and recommendation *are* contrary to any existing district policy.

Most districts have advisory committees of some type. They can have different titles and they can be formed for many purposes such as: Vocational/Career Education Advisory Committee, Budget Advisory Committee, Citizens Audit Committee, Report Card or Grading Committee, Citizens Committee for Establishing Goals, Referendum Advisory Committee.

As these committees perform their tasks, the individual members gain insights into the business of running the schools – but to varying degrees. As ad hoc committees, they are appointed, serve their purpose and, after a report of their findings, disband.

This brief exposure to the schools has not been a completely satisfying experience for many citizens. Their appetites for involvement were just being whetted when suddenly they were out of a job. Naturally, the school board and the administration have always expressed their thanks for the layman's participation. The reports have always been of great assistance in determining policy and procedures, but the individual's desire to be involved has, to a large extent, been frustrated.

How, then, can a district accommodate these individuals who are so eager to help? How can they be utilized on a continuing basis so that their input won't be just a one-shot affair? How can these people be given the opportunity to make lasting contributions – and know full well that their assistance will be of positive value?

One means of answering these questions and the one which we utilize in the Alfred I. duPont School District in Delaware has been establishing and maintaining *Citizens Advisory Committees in each of the local schools.*

These advisory groups grew out of an Ad Hoc Citizens Audit Committee preceding a referendum in 1969. Part of the committee's final report urged that the successes that they had in promoting citizen involvement, being in liaison with the schools, and in defining problem areas should be continued. They recommended that four citizens' committees be formed:

1. Citizens Study Committee (20-25 members)
2. Maintenance Committee (5-7 members)
3. Employe Relations Consultant Group (3-5 members)
4. Salary Administration Consultant Group (3-5 members)

The proposal added specifications for each of these groups; as to how they should be composed, their responsibilities, and their relationship with the board.

However, we had an additional need. Our suburban school district had grown from an essentially rural district with one school in 1954 to a district of 14 schools by the

addition of a school a year throughout the 1960s. Our five-man board, which had taken great pride in knowing closely the goings on in each school, was finding itself "out of touch" with some schools . . . it was difficult to ferret out real problems from individual overreacting parents' pressure. . . . After much study, we initiated a pilot program to have a Citizens School Advisory Committee for each school.

Since this pilot program was to be an advisory group for the board, it followed that the board should formally recognize and appoint the various members at a regular board meeting.

How were the commitee members chosen?

The building principal was a charter member of each committee. Depending on his school's communication system with its attendance area, the principal sent out flyers explaining the purpose of the advisory committee and the commitment required, and requested application for committee membership along with qualifications and interest. Generally the response was 2-3 times the number of applicants needed. The initial committee selection was done by the principal, a staff member, and the PTA executive committee. Terms would be for a period of 2-3 years. The school attendance district was divided into regions and candidates were selected on a geographic basis. Attempts were made to include a citizen with no children in public school. This has generated much enthusiasm among senior citizens and parochial school parents. Attention was paid to spreading other members over the various grade levels. In addition, students were included on the junior high and high school committees. The average committee had about 15 members.

Having mentioned the PTA, I should interject here that the PTA in our area is more a service and support agency than an advisory group. We did not expect the two – PTA and Advisory Committee – to be entirely comprised of the same people and certainly not for the same purposes.

The board asked the committees to operate under these guidelines:

1. Within two months of their formation, each committee was asked to submit formal bylaws which would spell out: the purpose of the committee; officers and method of election; method for selection of members, including length of service; methods for amending bylaws.

2. Committees were asked to meet at least four times per year.

3. Minutes were to be taken at each meeting with copies made available to the principal, the superintendent through his administrative assistant, and the school's PTA president.

4. An administrative assistant to the superintendent would act as staff liaison between the committees and the superintendent.

Keeping those guidelines in mind, how have the committees been of help to the board? Because we appoint them – as a regular board agenda item – their positions have more than just the "run of the mill" committee involvement. They are an arm of the board and as such they carry a lot of weight in their respective school areas.

A typical set of bylaws from one of our committees lists as its purpose:

> To promote communication and understanding among the school's administration, faculty, and students, the school board, the parents of students and the community at large.
>
> Under responsibility and authority, the bylaws state: "The committee serves at the pleasure of the board and is responsible to it; the committee is an advisor to the board and the school's administration, and its recommendations are not binding. Neither the committee nor its individual members have authority to speak or act for the school or the district; the committee has no *official responsibility or authority* in matters regarding the conduct or performance of individuals in the school administration, faculty, or student body. Members on our committees serve for two to three years and can be reelected once."

"Communication" has been the key word that would best describe our relationship. Our staff has kept the citizens advisory groups *almost* as well informed about school information as they do the board. Our district's news releases, our Staff Bulletins, board agenda, special reports to the board by various groups, and communications to the board by other advisory groups are all sent to the Advisory Committees. These individuals *do* feel informed about what's going on in the district, and in most instances are given the opportunity to share this information with others through civic, neighborhood or church contacts.

We have also asked the committees for their advice. After all, we call them advisory. Following the publishing of the 1972 Gallup Poll on education, our district produced a questionnaire of its own and received a response from 3,189 out of 11,900 homes. Discipline was listed as the second highest major concern of the persons who returned our survey. (Taxes and finances was the leading concern.) We asked each advisory committee to study and evaluate the problem of discipline in its respective school. They responded admirably with reports that would make any researcher sit up and take notice. Those reports set our minds at considerable ease when they pointed out that the discipline problem, while always a concern, was not as serious as the survey had indicated.

We also asked the committees to report to us the five

major areas of concern for their respective schools and attendance areas. Not surprisingly, out of the 70 items over 40 were different in nature. Only four items were repeated three or more times (class size, communications, condition of athletic fields, and transitions from one school to the next higher level). The broad scope of the other 36 concerns was indicative of localized points of view and problems. Attention to solutions by the board and staff can now be concentrated on those areas needing it most rather than diffusing our effort through the district as a whole. It also became clear that not all citizens or staff have the same feeling about areas of concern from building to building.

Our committees have been hard at work for several years, and as each day goes by they become more effective. We have encountered and corrected several weak points in our initial system.

- How can the committees effectively communicate with all citizens?
- How does the board effectively relate to each committee?

As an aid to communications of each committee, our district office has set up a complete addressograph mailing system to all residents (not just parents) in each school's attendance area. If a committee wishes to communicate with its citizens, we reproduce the document for them and use our bulk mailing permit.

For the board to effectively relate to each committee, each member of our five-man board has two or three committees assigned to him, and the board member attends the advisory committee meetings whenever possible. In this manner we have been able to ensure that the committees attack the real problems of the school and not get lost in a lot of trivia.

Are we delegating our responsibility as a board to other groups by seeking their advice? Most assuredly not. The ultimate responsibility in the policy setting area is still ours. We do feel a lot more comfortable, though, in rendering decisions based on a lot more investigation and thought than we could ever be expected to give. We are also able to make decisions with the knowledge that a lot more people know why we're making them.

How do *we* get full value from citizens committees?

- Have a continuing Citizens Advisory Committee in each school with minimum rotating terms of 2 years.
- Insure membership is broad in scope.
- Appoint each member by the board at a public meeting.
- Challenge the committee and respect its advice.
- Keep it informed.
- Provide the means for it to communicate with all citizens.

It may appear that our board advisory committee is a one-way street with the board on the receiving end. That is far from the truth. Our committee members are constantly receiving information from the staff. In addition, we board members assigned as liaison to several of the advisory committees are able to answer questions, provide them with our advice and input, and to interpret policy by being present at their meetings.

I can sum up the entire citizens advisory committee idea in our district with two words – *It's Working.* It is of immeasurable assistance to us in striving toward our ultimate goal of formulating through board policies an educational philosophy which reflects the needs and desires of the entire community.

Chapter 7

Evaluating the Advisory Committee

A primary function of many citizens advisory committees, especially those required by state or federal guidelines, is to evaluate current educational programs. Relatively little is heard about evaluation of the committee itself, yet the need should be obvious.

"Evaluation should include a status study of the school before and after a specific committee effort," said Frank M. Marlow, superintendent of Onteora Central Schools, Boiceville, N.Y. He further stated in an article in *Central Ideas* (published by the New York State School Boards Assn.) that "An evaluation of the committee should be made by the board, the superintendent and the committee itself."

While Title I, ESEA, regulations do not specifically require evaluation of the committee itself, *Parental Involvement in Title I, ESEA*, a manual prepared by the U.S. Office of Education, points out the advantage of such evaluation:

"Since the parent council is a new activity in most school districts, it is important that its success – or failure – be evaluated after each full year of operation. This evaluation should involve school officials, council members and other parents and community members. The effectiveness of the parent council should be tested against predetermined goals. What was it meant to accomplish? Did it succeed? How much of a voice did council members have in the formulation of Title I projects, the assessment of the needs of the target population and the actual operation of the project? How effective was the council in promoting involvement of other parents in the school system? What has the community response to the council been?

"Where weaknesses are noted, evaluators should attempt to pinpoint the cause. Did the council receive adequate support from the local education agency? Were council members committed to the concept of parental involvement? Did the council seek help when needed? Did school officials listen to the suggestions and comments of the council? Did parent members take an active part in council proceedings? Such an evaluation will enable the council, assisted by the local education agency, to change its procedures where needed or request additional help."

Spokane's PEP Workshop

A workshop to encourage parental involvement in the Spokane, Wash., schools was evaluated with procedures that could be extended to cover an evaluation for advisory committees.

The 34 parents participating in the workshop received an eight-item opinionnaire; 24 parents responded. Since the purpose of the Spokane workshop was to encourage parental participation, the key question was: "As a result of the workshop, do you plan to participate more in school activities next year?" Twenty-two respondents said yes.

The sample evaluation form is shown on p. 56.

San Diego's Evaluative Study

In an excellent preliminary evaluation of the fledgling Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) in the San Diego City Schools, the evaluators interviewed participants, studied agendas and minutes, and distributed questionnaires. A comprehensive profile of the citizens advisory committee program as it functioned in 1971-72 emerged from the evaluation. (See the San Diego profile, p. 42.) Following are some of the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation:

- The CAC program is in its early stages of development; there is considerable evidence

indicating that everybody is learning. There was a general feeling among the principals and CAC chairmen that the value of the program outweighs the problems, and that it needs time to evolve further.

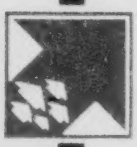
- CAC chairmen were generally positive about the program, and felt it to be a significant and necessary effort. They did not see evidence of major conflict with other school organizations.

- The principals as a group tended to be somewhat negative about the CAC program, perhaps because of additional workload and added stress. This was more evident in the secondary schools, which also tended to be more remote from community contact in terms of their size, geographic area and subject matter orientation than did the elementary schools.

- There is a need for regular review, modification and reaffirmation of the guidelines. If there is strict adherence to the guidelines by *all* concerned, the committees will become more positive and effective.

- The role of the CACs in their relationship to the board of education and central administration needs to be continually clarified. The guidelines state that they are advisory to the principals. However, on several occasions during the 1971-72 school year, the board of education and central administration requested specific reaction on policy matters, which led some of the committees to believe that this was their primary role. The general interest of the committees appeared to direct itself primarily to affairs in their local school of a program and planning nature. Many felt that this was their most helpful area of operation, and that they were in no position to give valid opinions regarding districtwide matters, or to lend support to another committee on problems peculiar only to the other school. It is recommended that, at least during the early stages of development, the committees be given an opportunity to become oriented and knowledgeable in the area of local school programs and activities. The major thrust of committee effort should be in providing assistance in identifying and validating local needs and recommended priorities in a manner which will help professional educators design and adapt programs to meet those needs.

- Leadership on the part of citizens and principals was quite variable. The most effective committees clearly appeared to be those with strong leadership on the part of both principals and chairmen. . . It is recommended that consideration be given to arranging workshops for principals in this area of community relations. It also appears desirable that there be an opportunity for orientation of CAC chairmen.



San Diego Sizes Up an Advisory Committee

Average number of members, including students	**15 to 16**
Average attendance	71%
Average number of meetings during the year	9
Average length of the meetings	2 1/2 hours
Average number of certificated staff involved	1 3/4
Certificated staff man-hours per meeting	3 1/2
Principal's preparation time	8-10 hrs/mo.
Chairman's preparation time	12 hrs/mo.
Secretarial preparation time	**8-9 hrs/mo.**

- It is recommended that the Community Relations Division establish regular coordination and communication with the PACs (Parent Advisory Committees under compensatory education programs), as well as with the CACs.

- There was universal agreement on the point that committees must be elected rather than appointed, otherwise they would not be regarded as representative, nor would they be trusted.

- More attention should be paid to the amount and form of materials sent. There were many pleas for summaries of materials rather than lengthy, in-depth reports. CACs were asked to react to too many major issues before they could get organized and become informed. These requests presumed a certain amount of prior knowledge, which often was not true. Also, committees and principals should be given six to eight weeks to react to matters submitted by the board of education and central administration.

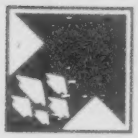
- A system should be set up to provide for acknowledgement of requests or suggestions, with follow-up, so that the CAC forwarding the request or suggestion would know the disposition.

- It should be remembered that the CAC program is designed to provide *two-way* communication between a representative cross section of the people in the community and the local school. One of the significant needs of the CACs is assistance in communicating with the people whom they are supposed to represent. Those schools and committees which have found new and innovative ways to solve this problem are requested to communicate these to the community relations division. The division will in turn disseminate the information to all through the newsletter.

Self-Assessment in Los Angeles

Los Angeles City Schools also conducted a careful evaluation of the first year's operation of citizen advisory committees, which in 1971-72 were established at all of the city's 560 schools. Questionnaires were sent to council chairmen, principals and a random selection of council members. The intent was to determine strengths and weaknesses and what might be done to improve effectiveness. The evaluation disclosed these needs: inservice training of committee members, ways to strengthen cooperation among committees, ways to overcome community apathy and provision for realistic participation.

Chapter 8



Profiles

The Metropolis and the Neighborhood: Los Angeles, Calif.

In Los Angeles, as in other large cities, two factors stimulated efforts to involve citizens in the operations of the schools at the building level: decentralization and federal program requirements. The city has had citizens committees for several years. They have been an integral part of the district's federally funded compensatory education programs since passage of ESEA. State laws and repeated urgings by succeeding superintendents encouraged their formation. Added momentum came in 1971 when a decentralization report, itself reflecting the input of more than one million citizens, strongly endorsed the establishment of school community organizations at every school to widen the avenues of shared decision making.

An assessment of the program's first year found:

- A need to develop a comprehensive, coordinated inservice program for all council members with emphasis on the roles of the chairman and principal.
- Cooperation among council members must be emphasized to increase council effectiveness.
- Community apathy is the most significant obstacle to effectiveness.
- All council members must be provided realistic participation.

In response to the evaluation, Los Angeles has:

- Set up extensive inservice training programs for advisory council members, financed in part with a three-year, $300,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, using printed matter, filmstrips and speakers.
- Furnished each school with an 80-item "Kit of Informational Resource and Curriculum Publications" to acquaint council members with district educational programs and policies.
- Produced several filmstrips especially for advisory council use and planned more on topics such as the organization and operation of advisory councils, conducting a meeting and local decision making.
- Held a series of informational sessions to explain the over-all program to a maximum number of citizens.
- Developed materials to help school principals generate maximum publicity for their school's advisory council activities as a way to overcome community apathy. The public information kits provide sample news releases on potential topics such as selection of council members, election of council officers, announcement of council meetings, announcement of a council project, adoption of a council proposal and the setting of council goals for the year. Also given is a detailed list of newspapers, their addresses and telephone numbers, broken down by attendance area to show which newspaper would be interested in which schools. For large papers such as *The Los Angeles Times*, the address and telephone number of local news bureaus are given.
- Published a monthly newsletter for council members that spreads the word on promising activities, district programs and education.

The district budgets funds to help the advisory councils defray incidental expenses. In the 1972-73 school year, the first year of this practice, a total of $45,000, based on an average of $80 per school, was put in the budget.

Each of the city's 560 schools now has a school-community advisory council whose basic functions are:

- To participate in the decision making process through involvement in assessment of educational needs, establishment of priorities, planning of the educational program and budget resources for it, definition of goals, and evaluation of the school and its academic effectiveness.
- To facilitate school communication with parents and community.
- To inform and advise school staff regarding community conditions.
- To assist in providing support to parents, teachers, students and community for school programs.

School staff, parents, other community representatives and students at secondary schools serve on the councils. At least 51% of each council's membership must be elected parents of pupils attending the school. The principal, and beyond him, the superintendent and board, retain powers for making final decisions.

Additional rules for membership are as follows: "In addition to parents, the membership of the council shall be composed of representatives of the general community within the school service area, at least one representative from school support groups, and at least one elected representative from the faculty, at least one elected representative of the classified employes and, for secondary schools, at least one student representative from each grade level, nominated and elected by students from the grade level represented. If a council decides to include more student representatives than there are grades in the school, the additional student representatives may be elected at large by the entire student body."

Further, each council may provide in its bylaws for the appointment by it of additional members to achieve broad representation and balance.

Parents and others need meet no special eligibility requirements other than that they live or spend the major portion of their work day within the attendance boundaries of the school.

Los Angeles' conscientious approach to citizens advisory committees at the building level is reflected in the following administrative regulations.

Los Angeles Administrative Regulations

Elections. Elections by groups other than parent and community members shall be conducted annually pursuant to democratic procedures and at times and places selected by such groups.

Election of parent, community, faculty, classified personnel and student representatives shall be held annually on the fourth Wednesday in October. The election process shall be conducted in a manner which shall insure the widest possible parent participation. Adequate notice of all election procedures shall be disseminated to the school and community. Such notice shall include, but not be limited to, written notices provided to school staff and to students for reference to parents, and community newspaper notices.

The nomination of parent and community representatives shall be submitted to the council at least two weeks prior to the annual election. Councils may provide for the submission of nominations by mail or at a regular meeting. Public notice stating the purpose and time of the meeting at which nominations will be received shall be given at least two weeks prior to such meeting using all reasonable means of communication, including, but not limited to, written notices to parents to be delivered by students and community newspaper notices. The nomination procedure shall be determined by each group and shall be fair and democratic. If a group is unable to provide a nomination procedure, the council may do so.

Councils may conduct elections at an open meeting or by secret ballot at one or more polling places at the local school. If a secret ballot is used, the polling places shall be open from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and shall be supervised by one or more election officials elected from the council by majority vote of the council. Each ballot shall be cast for a separate nominee and cumulative voting shall not be permitted. Those nominees receiving the greatest number of votes shall be declared elected at the next public meeting of the council.

Term of Office. It is recommended that the term of office for each elected council member shall be two years. A plan for staggering the terms of office should be provided for in the bylaws of each council.

Election of Officers. Election of new advisory council officers shall take place as soon as reasonably feasible following the completion of the election of all representatives. Officers shall take office immediately after their election. Vacancies may be filled at any regular or special meeting. Any voting member of the council is eligible to be an officer of the council.

Meetings. To assure open public meetings, the following requirements shall be met:

- All meetings shall be held within the geographical boundaries of the school which the council represents. Meetings held at locations other than at the school must be decided by a majority vote of the council at a regular meeting.
- All meetings shall be open and public and shall not require registration or other conditions precedent to attendance.
- Public notice of the regular meetings and the proposed agenda must be distributed in a manner that will assure that the community is informed of these scheduled meetings at least five days in advance of the date of the meeting.
- Special meetings may be held when requested by a majority of the membership of a council, or in emergencies when called by the chairman, and shall be announced publicly. Notice and the agenda of special meetings shall be mailed or delivered personally to each person who has made a written request for such a notice at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.
- In the event that a meeting of a council is willfully interrupted in a manner that prevents the orderly conduct of the meeting, the chairman may order the meeting room cleared and may continue in session. Only matters appearing on the agenda may be considered in such a session.

Bylaws. Bylaws established by councils shall conform to the intent of Board Rule 1370 and these Administrative Regulations.

Rules of Operation. Each council shall establish its own rules regarding the time, place and frequency of meetings, and the means of publicizing its actions. A quorum shall consist of at least 51% of the total elected membership of the council. No fewer than six meetings shall be held in a school year.

The principal shall be an ex-officio, nonvoting member of the council and will represent a resource to the council by providing information regarding the local school educational program. Should a School-Community Advisory Council submit suggestions and recommendations in writing to the principal, he shall respond in writing.

Decision making in areas not limited by the State Education Code, Rules of the State Board of Education, other law or Board Rules and Regulations of the Los Angeles Unified School District may be mutually identified by the principal and the School-Community Advisory Council. Each advisory council shall function primarily in relation to the local school. This rule shall not prohibit articulation between school levels in a cluster or complex.

Assessment. To assure periodic assessment of councils, provision shall be made by each council to provide for school and general community participation in evaluation of council operations and effectiveness. In addition, the district will conduct surveys to evaluate the functioning of councils.

Staff Development. Inservice training programs for councils shall be the responsibility of the area superintendent who will solicit the suggestions and support of principals, advisory council members and the District Staff Development Office.

Title I Schools. Title I councils shall be included under the provisions of Board Rule 1370 in all areas in which no legal conflict exists regarding Title I regulations.

Compliance. All councils shall comply with the above regulations, with the exception of new elections, prior to the conclusion of the current school year. New councils formed after the adoption of this rule shall adopt bylaws that conform to

this rule. Councils which have adopted bylaws prior to the effective date of this rule shall bring those bylaws into conformance with this rule before the last council meeting of the 1972-73 school year. The principal of each school shall ensure that Board Rule 1370 and the above regulations are implemented.

In addition to its extensive effort at the local building level, Los Angeles maintains districtwide committees covering special programs or in compliance with state and federal requirements. John A. Gillean, former director of the public information office, summed up the operational distinction between the districtwide and local building committees in a way that seems apt, not only for Los Angeles, but to describe the evolution of advisory committees everywhere.

He characterizes the district level benefits as "more philosophical." Referring to the local level, he says, "It is hoped that by participating in decision making at the local school level, citizens will feel they're playing a vital part in shaping the education of their children. The district also hopes that the councils will serve to bring the schools and the community closer together and help individualize instruction to meet local needs and aspirations."

Villa Park, Ill.: Gearing Down for More Effectiveness

An attempt by an Illinois district of three community high schools to establish a districtwide Citizens Advisory Committee did not fare well. But the practical experience caused the committee to shift its attention from districtwide interest to topics related to individual schools.

The Board of Education of Community High School District 88, Villa Park, Ill., created an 18-member Citizens Advisory Committee in 1971 to act as a bridge between itself and the community. Shortly thereafter the school board charged it with the task of studying financial problems, building facility needs and communications program. The CAC began with organized citizens' groups within the district to study the problems and was provided with school staff for resource work and a consultant from a local college of education. Supt. John R. Thorson reports what happened:

"For a committee so new and inexperienced, the job was overwhelming. Although participants made a sincere effort, the results were not very productive. A problem became very evident, and this is probably a situation which is not unique to us. A basic misunderstanding of the purpose of the study arose between the board and the CAC. The CAC interpreted its task was to inform the board about the various problems with which it was dealing. Because the individuals who made up the committees were not very knowledgeable in their respective areas, they had to rely upon input from the school administrative staff. We found what we were really doing was educating these persons in school finance, building needs, year-round school, vocational education, etc., and they in turn would report this to the board. Frankly, we could have written much better reports without this process.

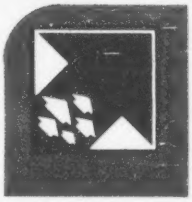
"We felt, however, that the effort could have been worthwhile in that more of our citizens would be knowledgeable about the school problems. But to have real impact on the community, these individuals should have been organized to then meet with more groups within the district. The real value to the board would be an informed public. Unfortunately, the CAC did not want to commit itself to this concept.

"Interest in the project from citizens not on the CAC waned, and only those remained who had special interests, such as eliminating art in the curriculum, firing all guidance counselors, having no classes under 20 students, etc. Bringing the project to a reasonable conclusion took utmost tact and cooperation of both the school officials and the CAC. We all learned from this experience. The CAC is now involved in more limited projects, and emphasis is being placed on meeting with school principals on topics related to individual schools."

The candor and clarity with which this school district has assessed its initial mistakes bodes well for greater success with a restructured program. Evidence from other communities corroborates the finding that advisory committees often do their best work on an individual school building level.

A New and Comprehensive Program: San Diego, Calif.

One of the best profiles of a citizens advisory committee program was developed in San Diego,



CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

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where an excellent evaluation was made of the district's first year of experience with advisory committees at all the schools. Excerpted below is the summary of the interview findings, which provide an in-depth picture of the program. The interviews, conducted with committee chairmen and principals, were one part of the overall evaluation.

Relationship Between CAC and Other Groups: Elementary and secondary principals held considerably diverse opinions on the relationship between the CAC and other groups. The secondary principals tended to view the CAC as having weakened the role of the PTA, with the PTA generally being somewhat sensitive and resentful. At the elementary level, principals indicated more overlap in membership between the CAC and PTA, with some initial animosity. Generally, then, the relationship was considerably better at the elementary level than at the secondary level. CAC chairmen at both levels did not express any difficulty in relationship with PTA or with other groups. Those schools where the relationship appeared to be best were those with overlapping memberships and a clear delineation of responsibilities between the two groups. The general delineation was that the PTA remained a helping agency more concerned with the operation of the school, while the CAC concerned itself with the general aspects of policy and program issues. One plus: the CAC program has created greater interest and involvement in schools on the part of men in the community.

Relationship to the Board: Opinions were highly variable in this area, with the majority of CAC chairmen seeing some direct relationship to the board on general issues, and the principals feeling that the committee should relate to the principal of the school and not to the board. While still needing clearer definition, this issue has been confused in the minds of the CACs and the principals by the fact that the board and administration have requested direct reaction from the CACs on several occasions. Parenthetically, it should be noted that CAC chairmen particularly, and principals to some extent, make no distinction between the board and central administration; they tend to view these as a single entity. As far as relationship with the board member representing the election district, generally, there had been little contact, and no belief that there should be any relationship. In two or three instances, committees invited the board member representing their respective area to particular meetings.

Control of Meetings: There was no indication from either principals or CAC chairmen of any significant attempt to control the functioning of the committees through such matters as agenda development. In regard to agenda, there was a general complaint that the times of the meetings had been preempted by board requests which took so much time that the committees did not have an opportunity to interest themselves in local school affairs. Also, both the chairmen and the principals were concerned with the timing of the requests; the short lead-time for response required special meetings.

Understanding of School Accomplishments and Problems: Both principals and chairmen indicated that the committees gained an understanding of both school accomplishments and problems. Generally, however, the committees tended to be more problem-oriented.

How CACs Assist the Principal: In general, more secondary principals tended to feel that CAC programs simply added more stress to their job. The elementary findings showed the CAC program to be more helpful, but with some confusion about the purpose and function of the committee. The responses concerning the value of the CACs in the order of frequency of occurrence were as follows:

1. Education of the community in school programs and operation.
2. Advice to the principal on local matters.
3. Two-way communication with the community.
4. Broader understanding of school problems and accomplishments.
5. Support of the principal in community relations.
6. Sharing some of the negative responses of the community with the principal.

Contact with Staff and Students: There was a general feeling that the secondary school students on the committees made valuable contributions. The elementary groups felt strongly that the students should not be required on the committees, but might be invited for specific issues. There was no evidence to indicate that faculty attitudes had been affected.

Committee Attitudes: Supportive or Critical? In general the committees' attitudes were seen as moving toward a more supportive position. This was particularly true at the elementary level, where the principals felt that the committees were supportive. At the secondary level, an occasional mention of "some support" was given, but "no change" and "no effect" were most frequently noted.

Replies to Committee Suggestions: Generally the CAC chairmen felt they had received prompt replies from the board and the administration, particularly in response to requests for information. Many expressed doubt, however, that the board and central administration paid attention to their suggestions. (Most of the interviewees were unaware that all minutes of committee meetings *are* reviewed and summarized for the board and the administration by the Community Relations Division.)

Effect of District Employes on Committees: The principals were more negative about this than the CAC chairmen. The CAC chairmen seemed to feel that district employes on the committee were valuable as a resource, but that they definitely should be elected as citizens of the area and should attempt to confine themselves to that role.

Appointment V. Election of Members: Both chairmen and principals, almost without exception, said committee members must be elected to be effective and to have credibility. Specific misgivings were expressed about the very limited participation in the first election, due perhaps to the fact that the program was implemented too rapidly. In one instance, there were more candidates than there were ballots cast. However, both chairmen and principals felt this problem would be remedied as the effort progressed.

Role in Financial Problems: CAC chairmen expressed very little interest or willingness in taking an active role on district bond/tax override election committees and matters of this type. Some stated that they had a strong suspicion that this was one of the reasons for the establishment of the CACs and were pleased to see that this was not, in fact, the case. They expressed primary interest in school programs and recommendations concerning programs at the local site. They appeared to feel they do not and cannot function effectively in district-wide financial planning.

Effect on Principal's Authority: When there was good cooperation and good joint management of committees, this did not appear to have been a problem. There was some feeling on the part of the principals, particularly because of direct board request for reaction, that the committees constituted a built-in "end run." CAC chairmen also appeared to recognize this possibility, but did not feel it was a problem. (This relates to their confusion about their relationship to the principals and/or Board of Education.) There was little evidence of attempts by the committees to get into personnel matters.

Concerns: Repeatedly expressed by both principals and CAC chairmen as concerns were:

- Guidelines need to be more clear and explicit than at present, and *everybody*, including the board and central administration, should adhere to the guidelines.
- The board needs to carefully manage its own role and position with respect to the committees and to clarify its expectations.
- The committees could become another pressure group in the absence of further definition of and strict compliance with guidelines.
- The committees should avoid becoming pressure groups; i.e., they should not contact one another for support. Such support should emerge out of local needs and priorities to the extent that two or more schools might have the same problem. However, occasional meetings with feeder schools might be useful.
- The need to guard against discouragement on the part of both the citizens on the committee and the staff.

- The need for assistance in communicating with the local community through newspaper, PTA, bulletins, sending agendas to homes.

Dayton, Ohio: Both Local and Citywide Committees

The establishment in large cities of local school advisory committees does not mean the end of more conventional districtwide committees. In some areas, in fact, something of a reverse effect operates. While building-level committees were formed to encourage decentralization, districtwide committees composed of representatives of the attendance area groups were set up to act as clearinghouses and to discuss districtwide concerns. Dayton, Ohio, presents such a case study.

In June 1968, the board of education created a Citizens Advisory Council. It was a districtwide, *ad hoc* group charged broadly with studying the progress and problems of the Dayton schools and reporting within a year. A major result of this study was the adoption by the board of a "Partnership with People Policy" in August 1969. The main thrust of the policy was to encourage development of citizen advisory councils in each school attendance area. Sixty-six community councils were formed. This was followed a year later by a citywide community advisory council consisting of representatives from each of the 66 community councils. It became known as the Dayton Advisory Council on Education (DACOE). DACOE also provides for membership of representatives of nonpublic schools. In addition to the representatives from the established community advisory councils of both public and nonpublic schools, voting members consist of the chairman of the superintendent's student advisory forum and six teachers elected by the recognized bargaining agent for the teachers. Since not all schools have advisory councils, DACOE accepts representation from a School Family Council, the PTA or PTO, or any other organization recognized by the school administration and designated by the principal, or an individual named by the principal.

DACOE meets monthly and discusses the same matters that interest local committees, but from a broader perspective. Good ideas and programs from local committees are exchanged. Topics have included integration, a middle school, helping to set up 35 Title I Parent Advisory Committees at the Title I schools, and even a policy on photographs of students. (Some members wanted to continue with group pictures at the grade level and some parents were interested in individual colored pictures of children.)

One of DACOE's discussions centered on its relationship with the PTA. To maintain good relations, DACOE changed its monthly meeting night to avoid a conflict with the PTA's citywide meeting night.

DACOE also passed this resolution: "DACOE, and its Community Advisory Councils, highly favor the cooperative working relationship with PTA and CAC and encourage working together in finding areas of individual responsibilities or concerns. DACOE favors the exchange of representatives on the two councils." Dayton publishes a monthly newsletter that carries the minutes of DACOE as well as information about individual councils.

The local community councils in Dayton are elected and their power can be considerable, varying somewhat from school to school. The councils have participated in the selection of principals in certain schools. Some have also sought help to demolish old buildings in the district that were hazardous to children.

Appendix

Sample Bylaws for Advisory Committees

A citizens advisory committee needs some guidance on basic rules and how to get started if it is to avoid consuming all its initial spurt of energy in frustration. The administrators of the California Title I, ESEA, programs, in recognizing this need, have put together a comprehensive and clearly written Handbook for California School District Advisory Committees. The handbook contains the following sample bylaws for use in setting up or reorganizing an advisory committee. Although aimed specifically at Title I programs, the bylaws suggest items to be covered in any set of advisory committee bylaws and the amount of detail needed under each bylaw.

ARTICLE I: Name of Committee

The name of this committee shall be the Compensatory Education Advisory Committee.

ARTICLE II: Objectives

The objective of the Compensatory Education Advisory Committee shall be to assist the school district to bring about the cooperation and coordination of community resources which may be of value to the schools in the operation of the compensatory education programs. In achieving this purpose, the Advisory Committee shall provide advice and assistance in:

1. Developing programs in cooperation with existing community action programs in their locality.
2. Mobilizing and coordinating all community resources in a concerted attack on the problems of educationally disadvantaged children.
3. Planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the compensatory education programs and disseminating information relative to the objectives of the programs.
4. Acting as a hearing board for any individual or group that may want to propose additions to or changes in the school district's proposed compensatory education programs.

This section of the bylaws shall in no way be construed as giving the Compensatory Education Advisory Committee or the local community action agency a veto over Title I or over any other compensatory education programs. The

committee shall be an advising, coordinating, and evaluating agency in order to further the purpose of education and the specific purpose of these bylaws. The Advisory Committee shall have no power to enter into contracts of any nature or to spend public funds. In the absence of his written consent, no committee member shall be required to provide any sum of money, property, or service, other than services described herein, to the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee shall have no power to bind any member or the school districts to any debt, liability, or obligation in the absence of an express written authorization from the party to be bound. The Advisory Committee shall have no powers beyond those expressly set forth herein.

ARTICLE III: Members

Section 1. Composition of Advisory Committee. The needs and resources of the school districts require that membership be obtained from a broad range of interested persons and that there be a maximum effort to involve the residents and parents of children who will participate in the compensatory education programs. In order to satisfy this requirement, the minimum standards for representation on the Advisory Committee shall be as follows:

1. Of the total membership on the Advisory Committee, no less than 50 percent shall be residents of the project areas in which the school district's program will be concentrated. In selecting the project area representatives, preference shall be given to parents of the educationally disadvantaged children.

2. The remaining membership on the Advisory Committee shall include membership from the school district's staff and the designee from the local community action agency, if one exists. It shall also include representatives from nonpublic school agencies responsible for the education of disadvantaged children in the project area, such as private and parochial schools, settlement houses or migrant labor camps, and leadership from the local community such as civic, business, labor, ethnic, or religious groups and from other public agencies of health and welfare that provide services to the disadvantaged children.

All committee members shall enjoy the full rights and obligations of membership.

Section 2. Selection of Members. Members shall be officially appointed by the governing board of the school district, based upon the committees' nominations. The members should demonstrate interest and concern for the welfare of young people to be served by the compensatory education programs. Each appointment shall be effective and each committee member shall serve upon the filing of his written acceptance with the school district.

Section 3. Term of Office. All members of the committee shall serve for a two-year term. However, in order to achieve staggered membership, one-half, or the nearest approximation thereof, of the members representing parents and residents and one-half, or the nearest approximation thereof, of the members representing organizations shall serve for a one-year term only during the first year of committee existence. After the first year of committee

existence, all terms shall be two years in length. At the first regular meeting of the committee, a chance method shall be used to determine which members shall serve one-year terms. At the conclusion of a member's term, at least one year shall elapse before such member may be reappointed to a new term.

Section 4. Voting Rights. Each member shall be entitled to one vote and may cast that vote on each matter submitted to a vote of the Advisory Committee. Proxy voting and absentee ballots shall not be permitted.

Section 5. Termination of Membership. A member shall no longer hold membership should he cease to be a resident of the area to be served or otherwise terminate his relationship with the group or organization which he was selected to represent. Membership should automatically terminate as to any member who is absent from all regular and special meetings for a period of three consecutive months. The committee, by affirmative vote of two-thirds of all of the members of the committee, may suspend or expel a member.

Section 6. Transfer of Membership. Membership in the Advisory Committee is not transferable or assignable.

Section 7. Alternates. A committee member may send an alternate. An alternate shall have no voting power, and the presence of an alternate shall not relieve a member from the effect of Section 5 of this Article.

Section 8. Resignation. Any member may resign by filing a written resignation with the school district.

Section 9. Vacancy. Any vacancy on the committee shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term through appointment by the school district.

ARTICLE IV: Officers

Section 1. Officers. The officers of the Advisory Committee shall be a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and such other officers as the committee may deem desirable.

Section 2. Election and Term of Office. The officers of the Advisory Committee shall be elected annually and shall serve for one year and until each successor has been elected and qualified.

Section 3. Removal. Any officer elected or appointed by the Advisory Committee may be removed by a two-thirds vote of all members sitting on the Advisory Committee whenever, in the judgment of the committee, the best interests of the committee would be served thereby.

Section 4. Vacancy. A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or otherwise may be filled by the committee for the unexpired portion of the term.

Section 5. Chairman. The chairman shall preside at all meetings of the Advisory Committee, and may sign all letters, reports, and other communications of the Advisory Committee. In addition, he shall perform all duties incident to the office of chairman and such other duties as may be prescribed

by the Advisory Committee from time to time. It is preferred that the chairman be a parent representative, and under no conditions should the chairman be a school district employe.

Section 6. Vice-Chairman. The duties of the vice-chairman shall be to represent the chairman in assigned duties and to substitute for the chairman during his absence, and he shall perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him by the chairman or by the Advisory Committee.

Section 7. Secretary. The secretary shall cause to be kept the minutes of the meetings, both regular and special, of the Advisory Committee and shall promptly transmit to each of the members, to the school district, and to such other persons as the committee may deem, true and correct copies of the minutes of such meetings; see that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws; be custodian of the committee's records; keep a register of the address and telephone number of each member of the committee which shall be furnished to the secretary by such member; and, in general, perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to the office by the chairman or by the Advisory Committee.

ARTICLE V: Committees

Section 1. Standing and Special Committees. The Advisory Committee may from time to time establish and abolish such standing or special committees as it may desire. Each member of every standing or special committee shall be a member of the Advisory Committee. No standing or special committee may exercise the authority of the Advisory Committee.

Section 2. Membership. Unless otherwise determined by the Advisory Committee in its decision to establish a committee, the chairman of the Advisory Committee shall appoint members to the various committees.

Section 3. Term of Office. Each member of a committee shall continue as such for the term of his appointment and until his successor is appointed, unless the committee shall be sooner terminated or abolished, or unless such member shall cease to qualify as a member thereof.

Section 4. Rules. Each committee may adopt rules for its own government not inconsistent with these bylaws or with rules adopted by the Advisory Committee.

Section 5. Quorum. Unless otherwise provided in the decision of the Advisory Committee designating a committee, a majority of the committee shall constitute a quorum and the act of a majority of the members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the committee.

Section 6. Vacancy. A vacancy in the membership of any committee may be filled by an appointment made in the same manner as provided in the case of the original appointment.

ARTICLE VI: Meetings of Advisory Committee

Section 1. Regular Meetings. The Advisory Committee shall meet regularly once each month.

Section 2. Special Meetings. Special meetings may be called by the chairman or by majority vote of the Advisory Committee.

Section 3. Place of Meetings. The Advisory Committee shall hold its regular monthly meetings and its special meetings in a facility provided by the school district.

Section 4. Notice of Meetings. Regular meetings must be notified. Any change in the established date, time, or location must be given special notice. All special meetings shall be noticed. Any required notice shall be in writing, shall state the day, hour, and location of the meeting, and shall be delivered either personally or by mail to each member not less than five days or more than three weeks before the date of such meeting.

Section 5. Decisions of Advisory Committee. All decisions of the Advisory Committee shall be made only after an affirmative vote of a majority of its members in attendance, provided a quorum is in attendance.

Section 6. Quorum. The presence of a majority of the members representing parents and the presence of a majority of members representing the organizations and agencies designated in these bylaws, shall be required in order to constitute a quorum necessary for the transaction of the business of the Advisory Committee. No decision of the Advisory Committee shall be valid unless a majority of the members of the Advisory Committee then appointed and holding office concur therein by their votes.

Section 7. Conduct of Meetings. All regular and special meetings of the Advisory Committee shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order or in accordance with an appropriate adaptation thereof.

Section 8. Meetings Open to School Representatives. All regular and special meetings of the Advisory Committee and of its standing or special committees shall be open at all times to representatives from the school district.

ARTICLE VII: Amendments

These bylaws may be amended at any time by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members of the Advisory Committee and with the help of the legal staff of the _____ School District, provided that the amendment is to further carry out the objectives of the Advisory Committee as herein expressed. Any amendments must conform with the state of California Guidelines: Compensatory Education (1971 Revision), published by the California State Department of Education.

In witness whereof, the Superintendent of Schools of the _____ _____ School District has caused these bylaws to be duly executed on the _____ day of _____, 19__.

Signed _____
District Superintendent

Sample Administrative Policy

Advisory committees should be appointed only when there is a definite function to be performed, and this function should be indicated to the committee in writing when it is appointed.

Advisory committees should be appointed primarily to advise the School Board. In general, individual members of such committees shall not be requested to perform specific services for the School Board. Unique talents of members can best be utilized on a consultative basis.

Advisory committees should not be appointed to advise on matters requiring decision by the School Board unless adequate time is available for a thorough study by the committee.

The School Board shall seek the advice of the Superintendent before establishing or dissolving any advisory committee.

Specific topics for study or well-defined areas of activity shall be assigned in writing to each committee immediately following its appointment.

Upon completing its assignment, each committee either shall be given new problems or shall be dissolved promptly. No committee shall be allowed to continue for prolonged periods without a definite assignment.

Each committee shall be instructed as to:

1. The length of time each member is being asked to serve.
2. The service the School Board wishes it to render.
3. The resources the School Board intends to provide to help it complete its job.
4. The approximate dates on which the School Board wishes it to submit reports.
5. The time and place of the first meeting.
6. The School Board policies governing citizens committees to help clarify relationships from the beginning.
7. Its relationships with the School Board as a whole, with individual School Board members, with the Superintendent; and with other members of the professional staff.
8. The approximate date on which the School Board wishes to dissolve the committee.

The School Board shall have the sole power to dissolve any of its advisory committees and shall reserve the right to exercise this power at any time during the life of any committee.

Sample Board Policy

The Board of Education supports and encourages development of School Community Partnership Councils in each elementary (grades K-6 and 7-8) attendance area, a regional representative council in each high school attendance area, and a districtwide representative council with the purpose of:

- Arousing the interest of citizens in educational affairs and operation of individual schools and the school system as a whole.
- Involving citizens in a meaningful way in problems and important decisions confronting their schools.
- Developing better understanding among homes, schools and staff.
- Creating unity of action and citizen support upon which the education of pupils depends.

The Board recommends the following guidelines in the establishment of such councils:

1. That the council in each school attendance area be elective.
2. That the structure and membership broadly represent educational, ethnic, racial, social and economic characteristics of the community.
3. That consideration be given to teacher, pupil, parent and non-parent representation.

The Board further recommends that such councils function to:

1. Offer suggestions, pose questions, problems, courses of action for study, evaluation, and action to the principal, superintendent and Board of Education.
2. Make suggestions on administrative and policy matters.
3. Coordinate activities cooperatively with administration, teachers and community.
4. Provide for adequate communication of results of meetings, recommendations and activities to all concerned.

The Board will give full consideration to suggestions from such councils in order that these councils may share in the important decisions for their schools.

Sample Letter to Parents

In Springfield, Mass., which has an election procedure, letters were sent to parents of children at Title I schools soliciting their participation in the formation of a Parent's Advisory Council. Separate letters were sent from the school counselor, breakfast supervisor, and teacher's aides, and the letters were written in both English and Spanish.

Dear Parents:

I am a "Teacher's Aide" and I help your child in school. I do many things so that the teacher is free to work more closely with your child.

We are having a meeting on Wednesday, December 16th at 1:30 p.m. to form a Parent Advisory Council. Please come. We need your help.

_____

Teacher's Aide

Amis parientes,

Yo soy una "Teacher's Aide." Yo ayudo a la maestra. Yo ayudo a su nino en la escuela. Yo hago muy cosas para que la maestra puede ajudar a su nino.

Tenemos una junta al Miercoles el 16th de Deciembre a la una y media (1:30) para formar una "Parent's Advisory Council." Si pueden venir, vengan por favor. Necesitamos su ayuda.

_____

Teacher's Aide

Sample Membership Application

SUPERINTENDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Membership Application Form

Date: _____

Name: (please print) _____
Last First Middle

Home Address: _____
Number Street Town Zip Code

Are you a qualified registered voter: Yes _____ No _____

Telephone Number: _____ Occupation: _____

Employed by: _____

Business Address: _____
Number Street Town Zip Code

Business Telephone Number: _____

What civic, social or other community organizations do you belong to?

_____ _____

_____ _____

Please comment as to why you would like to be on this committee: (Optional)

(Applicants who are not selected will be notified that their names will be placed in a "pool" for possible future use by the Membership Subcommittee.)

Sample Evaluation Form

One school district invites parents to participate in a "Parents Enrichment Program" (PEP) as part of its community involvement efforts.

A workshop format is used with both parents and teachers involved in give-and-take sessions. At the end of the workshop, parents are asked to fill out the evaluation form shown below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My ideas were accepted by the teacher.					
2. The teachers responded well to the feelings of the parents.					
3. The ideas presented were worthwhile.					
4. The ideas were practical.					

The PEP Workshop:

5. Gave me an opportunity to express my ideas.					
6. Made me more aware that parents can help the schools.					
7. Acquainted me with student needs at school.					
8. Was helpful in discovering ways parents may participate in school activities.					

A. What was the most important idea you heard at the workshop?

_____

B. Was there an idea or question that was not discussed in the workshop which would have been helpful to the group?

_____

_____